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A VOYAGE UND THE WORLD



·AUSTRALIA·

KE 20461



Edward, J. Howe,

Eddie Horne.

Apr. 25th 1877



The sleigh and its team set off for the day.

A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD

By JULES VERNE

AUTHOR OF "THE ENGLISH AT THE NORTH POLE,"
"THE FIELD OF ICE," ETC. ETC.

AUSTRALIA



WITH 48 ILLUSTRATIONS BY RIOU

LONDON AND NEW YORK
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A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.

Australia.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN TO THE DUNCAN.

FOR the first few moments the joy of reunion completely filled all hearts. Lord Glenarvan had taken care that the ill-success of their expedition should not throw a gloom over the pleasure of meeting, his very first words being—

“Cheer up, friends, cheer up! Captain Grant is not with us, but we have a certainty of finding him!”

Only such an assurance as this would have restored hope to those on board the *Duncan*. Lady Helena and Mary Grant had been sorely tried by the suspense, as they stood on the poop, waiting for the arrival of the boat, and trying to count the number of its passengers. Alternate hope and fear agitated the bosom of poor Mary. Sometimes she fancied she could see her father, Harry Grant, and sometimes she gave way to despair. Her heart throbbed violently; she could not speak,

and indeed could scarcely stand. Lady Helena put her arm round her waist to support her, but the captain, John Mangles, who stood close beside them, spoke no encouraging word, for his practised eye saw plainly that the Captain was not there.

“He is there! He is coming! Oh father!” exclaimed the young girl.

But as the boat came nearer, her illusion was dispelled; all hope forsook her, and she would have sunk in despair, but for the reassuring voice of Glenarvan.

After their mutual embraces were over, Lady Helena, and Mary Grant, and John Mangles, were informed of the principal incidents of the expedition, and especially of the new interpretation of the document, due to the sagacity of Jacques Paganel. His Lordship also spoke in the most eulogistic terms of Robert, of whom Mary might well be proud. His courage and devotion, and the dangers he had run, were all shown up in strong relief by his patron, till the modest boy did not know which way to look, and was obliged to hide his burning cheeks in his sister’s arms.

“No need to blush, Robert!” said John Mangles. “Your conduct has been worthy of your name.”

And he leaned over the boy, and pressed his lips on his cheek, still wet with Mary’s tears.

The Major and Paganel, it need hardly be said, came in for their due share of welcome, and Lady Helena only regretted she could not shake hands with the brave generous Thalcave. McNabbs soon slipped away to his cabin, and began to shave himself as coolly



"Lady Helena put her arm round her waist to support her."—P. 2.

and composedly as possible; while Paganel flew here and there, like a bee sipping the sweets of compliments and smiles. He wanted to embrace everyone on board the yacht, and beginning with Lady Helena and Mary Grant, wound up with M. Olbinett, the steward, who could only acknowledge so polite an attention by announcing that breakfast was ready.

“Breakfast!” exclaimed Paganel.

“Yes, Monsieur Paganel.”

“A real breakfast, on a real table, with a cloth and napkins.”

“Certainly, Monsieur Paganel.”

“And we shall neither have *charqui*, nor hard eggs, nor fillets of ostrich.”

“Oh, monsieur,” said Olbinett, in an aggrieved tone.

“I don’t want to hurt your feelings, my friend,” said the geographer smiling. “But for a month that has been our usual bill of fare, and when we dined we stretched ourselves full-length on the ground, unless we sat astride on the trees. Consequently, the meal you have just announced seemed to me like a dream, or fiction, or chimera.”

“Well, Monsieur Paganel, come along, and let us prove its reality,” said Lady Helena, who could not help laughing.

“Take my arm,” replied the gallant geographer.

“Has your Lordship any orders to give me about the *Duncan*?” asked John Mangles.

“After breakfast, John,” replied Glenarvan, “we’ll

discuss the programme of our new expedition *en famille*."

M. Olbinett's breakfast seemed quite a *fête* to the hungry guests. It was pronounced excellent, and even superior to the festivities of the Pampas. Paganel was helped twice to each dish, through "absence of mind," he said.

This unlucky word reminded Lady Helena of the amiable Frenchman's propensity, and made her ask if he had ever fallen into his old habits while they were away. The Major and Glenarvan exchanged smiling glances, and Paganel burst out laughing, and protested on his honour that he would never be caught tripping again once more during the whole voyage. After this prelude, he gave an amusing recital of his disastrous mistake in learning Spanish, and his profound study of Camoens.

"After all," he added, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and I don't regret the mistake."

"Why not, my worthy friend?" asked the Major.

"Because I not only know Spanish, but Portuguese. I can speak two languages instead of one."

"Upon my word, I never thought of that," said McNabbs. "My compliments, Paganel—my sincere compliments."

But Paganel was too busily engaged with his knife and fork to lose a single mouthful, though he did his best to eat and talk at the same time. He was so taken up with his plate, however, that one little fact quite escaped his observation, though Glenarvan

noticed it at once. This was, that John Mangles had grown particularly attentive to Mary Grant. A significant glance from Lady Helena told him, moreover, how affairs stood, and inspired him with affectionate sympathy for the young lovers; but nothing of this was apparent in his manner to John, for his next question was what sort of voyage he had made?

"We could not have had a better; but I must apprise your Lordship that I did not go through the Straits of Magellan again."

"What! you doubled Cape Horn, and I was not there?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Hang yourself!" said the Major.

"Selfish fellow! you advise me to do that because you want my rope!" retorted the geographer.

"Well, you see, my dear Paganel, unless you have the gift of ubiquity, you can't be in two places at once. While you were scouring the Pampas, you could not be doubling Cape Horn."

"That doesn't prevent my regretting it," replied Paganel.

Here the subject dropped, and John continued his account of the voyage. On arriving at Cape Pilares, he had found the winds dead against him, and therefore made for the south, coasting along the Desolation Isles, and after going as far as the sixty-seventh degree of southern latitude, had doubled Cape Horn, passed by Terra-del-Fuego, and the Straits of Lemaire, keeping close to the Patagonian shore. At Cape Corrientes they encountered the terrible storm which had handled

the travellers across the Pampas so roughly, but the yacht had borne it bravely, and for the last three days had stood right out to sea, till the welcome signal gun of the expedition was heard announcing the arrival of the anxiously-looked-for party. "It was only justice," the captain added, "that he should mention the intrepid bearing of Lady Helena and Mary Grant throughout the whole hurricane. They had not shown the least fear, unless for their friends, who might possibly be exposed to the fury of the tempest."

After John Mangles had finished his narrative, Glenarvan turned to Mary, and said—

"My dear Miss Mary, the captain has been doing homage to your noble qualities, and I am glad to think you are not unhappy on board his ship."

"How could I be?" replied Mary, *naïvely*, looking at Lady Helena, and at the young captain too, likely enough.

"Oh, my sister is very fond of you, Mr. John, and so am I," exclaimed Robert.

"And so am I of you, my dear boy," returned the captain, a little abashed by Robert's innocent avowal, which had kindled a faint blush on Mary's cheek.

Thus he managed to turn the conversation to safer topics, by saying—

"And now that your Lordship has heard all about the doings of the *Duncan*, perhaps you will give us some details of your own journey, and tell us more about the exploits of our young hero."

Nothing could be more agreeable than such a recital

to Lady Helena and Mary Grant; and accordingly, Lord Glenarvan hastened to satisfy their curiosity. Going over incident by incident, the entire march from one ocean to another, the pass of the Andes, the earthquake, the disappearance of Robert, his capture by the condor, Thalcav's providential shot, the episode of the red wolves, the devotion of the young lad, Sergeant Manuel, the inundations, the caimans, the waterspout, the night on the Atlantic shore—all these details, amusing or terrible, excited by turns laughter and horror in the listeners. Often and often Robert came in for caresses from his sister and Lady Helena. Never was a boy so much embraced, or by such enthusiastic friends.

“And now, friends,” added Lord Glenarvan, when he had finished his narrative, “we must think of the present. The past is gone, but the future is ours. Let us come back to Captain Harry Grant.”

As soon as breakfast was over they all went into Lady Glenarvan's private cabin, and seated themselves round a table covered with charts and plans, to talk over the matter fully.

“My dear Helena,” said Lord Glenarvan, “I told you when we came on board a little while ago, that though we had not brought back Captain Grant, our hope of finding him was stronger than ever. The result of our journey across America is this: We have reached the conviction, or rather absolute certainty, that the shipwreck neither occurred on the shores of the Atlantic nor Pacific. The natural inference is that as far as regards Patagonia, our interpretation of the

document was erroneous. Most fortunately our friend Paganel in a happy moment of inspiration discovered the mistake. He has proved clearly that we have been on a wrong track, and so explained the document, that all doubt whatever is removed from our minds. However as the document is in French, I will ask Paganel to go over it for your benefit.

The learned geographer thus called upon, executed his task in the most convincing manner, descanting on the syllables *gonie* and *indi*, and extracting *Australia* out of *austral*. He pointed out that Captain Grant, on leaving the coast of Peru to return to Europe, might have been carried away with his disabled ship by the southern currents of the Pacific, right to the shores of Australia, and his hypotheses were so ingenious and his deductions so subtle, that even the matter-of-fact John Mangles, a difficult judge, and most unlikely to be led away by any flights of imagination, was completely satisfied.

At the conclusion of Paganel's dissertation, Glenarvan announced that the *Duncan* would sail immediately for Australia.

But before the decisive orders were given, McNabbs asked for a few minutes' hearing.

"Say away, McNabbs," replied Glenarvan.

"I have no intention of weakening the arguments of my friend Paganel, and still less of refuting them. I consider them wise and weighty, and deserving our attention, and think them justly entitled to form the basis of our future researches. But still I should like



“‘Go on, Major,’ said Paganel.”—P. 9.

them to be submitted to a final examination in order to make their worth incontestable and uncontested."

"Go on, Major," said Paganel; "I am ready to answer all your questions."

"They are simple enough, as you will see. Five months ago, when we left the Clyde, we had studied these same documents, and their interpretation then appeared quite plain. No other coast but the western coast of Patagonia could possibly, we thought, have been the scene of the shipwreck. We had not even the shadow of a doubt on the subject."

"That's true," replied Glenarvan.

"A little later," continued the Major, "when a providential fit of absence of mind came over Paganel, and brought him on board the yacht, the documents were submitted to him, and he approved our plan of search most unreservedly."

"I do not deny it," said Paganel.

"And yet we were mistaken," resumed the Major.

"Yes, we were mistaken," returned Paganel; "but it is only human to make a mistake, while to persist in it, a man must be a fool."

"Stop, Paganel, don't excite yourself; I don't mean to say that we should prolong our search in America."

"What is it, then, that you want?" asked Glenarvan.

"A confession, nothing more; a confession that Australia now as evidently appears to be the theatre of the shipwreck of the *Britannia* as America did before."

"We confess it willingly," replied Paganel.

"Very well then, since that is the case, my advice is not to let your imagination rely on successive and contradictory evidence. Who knows whether after Australia some other country may not appear with equal certainty to be the place, and we may have to recommence our search?"

Glenarvan and Paganel looked at each other silently, struck by the justice of these remarks.

"I should like you, therefore," continued the Major, "before we actually start for Australia, to make one more examination of the documents. Here they are, and here are the charts. Let us take up each point in succession through which the 37th parallel passes, and see if we come across any other country which would agree with the precise indications of the document."

"Nothing can be more easily and quickly done," replied Paganel; "for countries are not very numerous in this latitude, happily."

"Well, look," said the Major, displaying an English planisphere on the plan of Mercator's Chart, and presenting the appearance of a terrestrial globe.

He placed it before Lady Helena, and then they all stood round, so as to be able to follow the argument of Paganel.

"As I have said already," resumed the learned geographer, "after having crossed South America the 37th degree of latitude cuts the Islands of Tristan d'Acunha. Now I maintain that none of the words of the document could relate to these islands."

The documents were examined with the most minute care, and the conclusion unanimously reached was that these islands were entirely out of the question.

"Let us go on then," resumed Paganel. "After leaving the Atlantic, we pass two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Indian Ocean. Only one group of islands is found on this route, the Amsterdam Isles. Now, then, we must examine these as we did the Tristan d'Acunha group."

After a close survey, the Amsterdam Isles were rejected in their turn. Not a single word, or part of a word, French, English, or German could apply to this group in the Indian Ocean.

"Now we come to Australia," continued Paganel. "The 37th parallel touches this continent at Cape Bernouilli, and leaves it at Twofold Bay. You will agree with me that, without straining the text, that the English word *stra* and the French one *Austral* may relate to Australia. The thing is too plain to need proof."

The conclusion of Paganel met with unanimous approval; every probability was in his favour.

"And where is the next point?" asked McNabbs.

"That is easily answered. After leaving Twofold Bay, we cross an arm of the sea which extends to New Zealand. Here I must call your attention to the fact that the French word *contin* means a continent, irrefragably. Captain Grant could not then have found refuge in New Zealand, which is only an island. However that may be though, examine and compare,

and go over and over each word, and see if, by any possibility, they can be made to fit this new country."

"In no way whatever," replied John Mangles, after a minute investigation of the documents and the planisphere.

"No," chimed in all the rest, and even the Major himself, "it cannot apply to New Zealand."

"Now," went on Paganel, "in all this immense space between this large island and the American coast, there is only one solitary barren little island crossed by the 37th parallel."

"And what is its name?" asked the Major.

"Here it is, marked in the map. It is Maria Theresa, a name of which there is not a single trace in either of the three documents."

"Not the slightest," said Glenarvan.

"I leave you then, my friends, to decide whether all these probabilities, not to say certainties, are not in favour of the Australian continent."

"Evidently," replied the captain and all the others.

"Well, then, John," said Glenarvan, "the next question is, have you provisions and coal enough?"

"Yes, your Honour, I took in an ample store at Talcahuano, and, besides, we can easily replenish our stock of coal at Cape Town."

"Well, then, give orders."

"Let me make one more observation," interrupted McNabbs.

"Go on then."

"Whatever likelihood of success Australia may offer

us, wouldn't it be advisable to stop a day or two at the Tristan d'Acunha Isles and the Amsterdam? They lie in our route, and would not take us the least out of the way. Then we should be able to ascertain if the *Britannia* had left any traces of her shipwreck there."

"Incredulous Major!" exclaimed Paganel, "he still sticks to his idea."

"I stick to this any way, that I don't want to have to retrace our steps, supposing that Australia should disappoint our sanguine hopes."

"It seems to me a good precaution," replied Glenarvan.

"And I'm not the one to dissuade you from it," returned Paganel; "quite the contrary."

"Steer straight for Tristan d'Acunha."

"Immediately, your Honour," replied the captain, going on deck, while Robert and Mary Grant overwhelmed Lord Glenarvan with their grateful thanks.

Shortly after, the *Duncan* had left the American coast, and was running eastward, her sharp keel rapidly cutting her way through the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTER II.

TRISTAN D'ACUNHA.

IF the yacht had followed the line of the equator, the 196 degrees which separate Australia from America, or, more correctly, Cape Bernouilli from Cape Corrientes, would have been equal to 11,760 geographical miles; but along the 37th parallel these same degrees, owing to the form of the earth, only represent 9,480 miles. From the American coast to Tristan d'Acunha is reckoned 2,100 miles—a distance which John Mangles hoped to clear in ten days, if east winds did not retard the motion of the yacht. But he was not long uneasy on that score, for towards evening the breeze sensibly lulled and then changed altogether, giving the *Duncan* a fair field on a calm sea for displaying her incomparable qualities as a sailer.

The passengers had fallen back into their ordinary ship life, and it hardly seemed as if they really could have been absent a whole month. Instead of the Pacific, the Atlantic stretched itself out before them, and there was scarcely a shade of difference in the waves of the two oceans. The elements after having handled

them so roughly, seemed now disposed to favour them to the utmost. The sea was tranquil, and the wind kept in the right quarter, so that the yacht could spread all her canvas, and lend its aid to the indefatigable steam stored up in the boiler.

Under such conditions, the voyage was safely and rapidly accomplished. Their confidence increased as they found themselves nearer the Australian coast. They began to talk of Captain Grant as if the yacht were going to take him on board at a given port. His cabin was got ready, and berths for the men. This cabin was next to the famous *number six*, which Paganel had taken possession of instead of the one he had booked on the *Scotia*. It had been till now occupied by M. Olbinett, who vacated it for the expected guest. Mary took great delight in arranging it with her own hands, and adorning it for the reception of the loved inmate.

The learned geographer kept himself closely shut up. He was working away from morning till night at a work entitled "Sublime Impressions of a Geographer in the Argentine Pampas," and they could hear him repeating elegant periods aloud before committing them to the white pages of his day-book ; and more than once, unfaithful to Clio, the muse of history, he invoked in his transports the divine Calliope, the muse of epic poetry.

Paganel made no secret of it either. The chaste daughters of Apollo willingly left the slopes of Helicon and Parnassus at his call. Lady Helena paid him

sincere compliments, on his mythological visitants, and so did the Major, though he could not forbear adding—

“But mind, no fits of absence of mind, my dear Paganel; and if you take a fancy to learn Australian, don't go and study it in a Chinese grammar.”

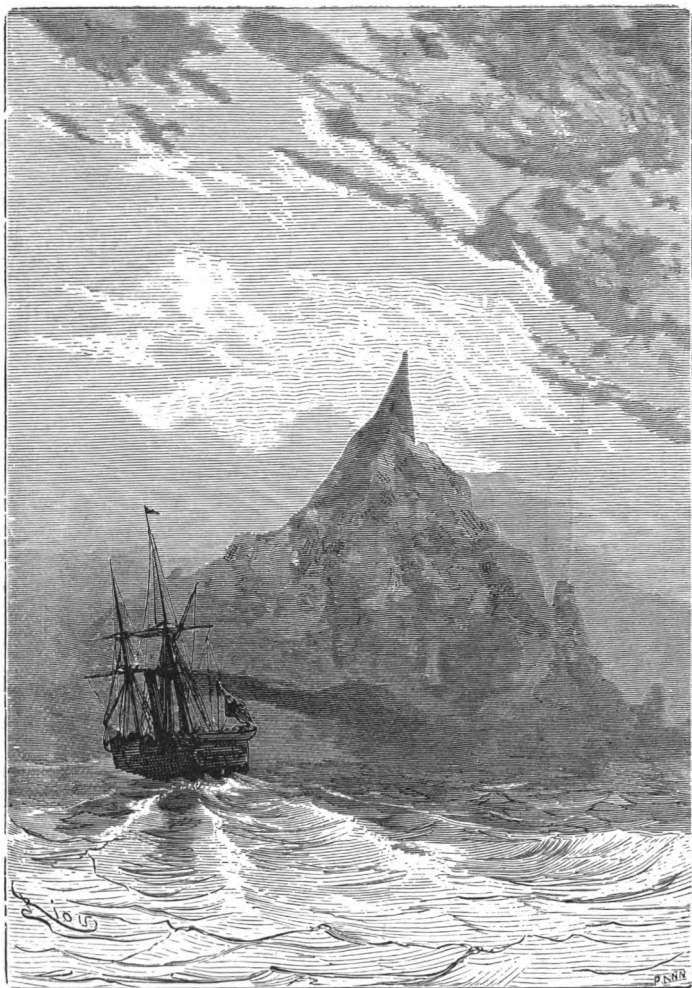
Things went on perfectly smoothly on board. Lady Helena and Lord Glenarvan found leisure to watch John Mangles' growing attachment to Mary Grant. There was nothing to be said against it, and, indeed, since John remained silent it was best to take no notice of it.

“What will Captain Grant think?” Lord Glenarvan asked his wife one day.

“He'll think John is worthy of Mary, my dear Edward, and he'll think right.”

Meanwhile, the yacht was making rapid progress. Five days after losing sight of Cape Corrientes, on the 16th of November, they fell in with fine westerly breezes, and the *Duncan* might almost have dispensed with her screw altogether, for she flew over the water like a bird, spreading all her sails to catch the breeze, as if she were running a race with the Royal Thames Club yachts.

Next day, the ocean appeared covered with immense sea-weeds, looking like a great pond choked up with the *debris* of trees and plants torn off the neighbouring continents. Commander Murray had specially pointed them out to the attention of navigators. The *Duncan* appeared to glide over a long prairie, which Paganel justly compared to the Pampas, and her speed slackened a little.



"The conical peak of Tristan looked black against the bright sky."—P. 17.

Twenty-four hours after, at break of day, the man on the look-out was heard calling out—

“Land ahead!”

“In what direction?” asked Tom Austin, who was on watch.

“Leeward!” was the reply.

This exciting cry brought everyone speedily on deck. Soon a telescope made its appearance, followed immediately by Jacques Paganel.

The learned geographer pointed the instrument in the direction indicated, but could see nothing that resembled land.

“Look in the clouds,” said John Mangles.

“Ah, now I do see a sort of peak, but very indistinctly.”

“It is Tristan d'Acunha,” replied John Mangles.

“Then if my memory serves me right, we must be eighty miles from it, for the peak of Tristan, seven thousand feet high, is visible at that distance.”

“That's it precisely.”

Some hours later, the sharp, lofty crags of the group of islands stood out clearly on the horizon. The conical peak of Tristan looked black against the bright sky which seemed all ablaze with the splendour of the rising sun. Soon the principal island stood out from the rocky mass, at the summit of a triangle inclining towards the north-east.

Tristan d'Acunha is situated in $37^{\circ} 8'$ of southern latitude, and $10^{\circ} 44'$ of longitude west of the meridian at Greenwich. Inaccessible Island is eighteen miles

to the south-west, and Nightingale Island is ten miles to the south-east, and this completes the little solitary group of islets in the Atlantic Ocean. Towards noon, the two principal landmarks by which the group is recognized were sighted, and at 3 p.m. the *Duncan* entered Falmouth Bay in Tristan d'Acunha.

Several whaling vessels were lying quietly at anchor there, for the coast abounds in seals and other marine animals.

John Mangles' first care was to find good anchorage, and then all the passengers, both ladies and gentlemen, got into the long boat and were rowed ashore. They stepped out on a beach covered with fine black sand, the impalpable *débris* of the calcined rocks of the island.

Tristan d'Acunha is the capital of the group, and consists of a little village, lying in the heart of the bay, and watered by a noisy rapid stream. It contained about fifty houses, tolerably clean, and disposed with geometrical regularity. Behind this miniature town there lay 1,500 hectares of meadow land, bounded by an embankment of lava. Above this the conical peak rose 7000 feet high.

Lord Glenarvan was received by a governor supplied from the English colony at the Cape. He inquired at once respecting Harry Grant and the *Britannia*, and found the names entirely unknown. The Tristan d'Acunha Isles are out of the route of ships, and consequently little frequented. Since the wreck of the *Blendon Hall* in 1821, on the rocks of Inaccessible

Island, two vessels have stranded on the chief island—the *Primanguet* in 1845, and the three-mast American *Philadelphia* in 1857. These three events comprise the whole catalogue of maritime disasters in the annals of the Acunhas.

Lord Glenarvan did not expect to glean any information, and only asked by way of duty. He even sent the boats to make the circuit of the island, the entire extent of which was not more than seventeen miles at most.

In the interim the passengers walked about the village. The population does not exceed 150 inhabitants, and consists of English and Americans, married to negroes and Cape Hottentots, who might bear away the palm for ugliness. The children of those heterogeneous households are very disagreeable compounds of Saxon stiffness and African blackness.

The tourists extended their promenade along the shore, glad to feel the firm ground beneath their feet. This is the only part of the island which is cultivated; wide-spreading pastures stretching upwards from the beach. Everywhere else the coast is composed of steep, craggy cliffs of lava, where enormous albatrosses and stupid penguins congregate in hundreds of thousands.

These rocks are of igneous origin, and after the visitors had examined them carefully, they went upwards towards the plain. Sparkling, murmuring brooks fed by the eternal snows which crowned the cone, ran here and there, green bushes on which the eye could count almost as many sparrows as flowers,

enlivened the meadows. One solitary tree, twenty feet high, and the "tussah," a gigantic species of plant, with a woody stem, grew in the fertile pastures; but altogether the flora was very limited in extent, though what little there was appeared very abundant. Eternal spring seemed to smile on the island, and Paganel proposed to Lady Helena that she should seek out a grotto like the famous Calypso, and that he should be one of her attendant nymphs.

It was nearly nightfall before the party returned to the yacht, chattering and admiring the natural riches displayed on all sides, for even close to the streets of the capital, fields of wheat and maize were waving, and crops of vegetables, imported forty years before; and in the environs of the village, herds of cattle and sheep were feeding.

The boats returned to the *Duncan* about the same time as Lord Glenarvan. They had made the circuit of the entire island in a few hours, but without coming across the least trace of the *Britannia*. The only result of this voyage of circumnavigation was to strike out the name of Isle Tristan from the programme of search.

There was nothing now therefore to prevent the *Duncan* from at once resuming her course eastwards, and the reason that she did not set sail that same night was that Glenarvan had given permission to the sailors to hunt the innumerable seals which crowd Falmouth Bay. Whales, too, were formerly very numerous about the island, but they have been chased and harpooned by so many ships' crews, that scarcely any are left.

Amphibious animals, on the contrary, are in shoals, and the men determined to spend the whole night in hunting them, and to devote the next day to securing a good provision of oil. It was consequently fixed that the *Duncan* should not sail till the day after.

During supper, Paganel gave some interesting details about the Tristan Islands. He informed his auditors that the group was discovered in 1506 by a Portuguese, named Tristan d'Acunha, though it remained unexplored for more than a century. These islands were reckoned, and not without reason, as the nests of tempests, and had almost as bad a name as the Bermudas. They were scarcely ever approached, and no ship touched there, unless driven by Atlantic gales.

It was not till 1811, that an American, Jonathan Lambert, undertook to colonise them. He and two others landed there in the month of January, and courageously commenced their labours as colonists. The English governor of the Cape of Good Hope, hearing that they prospered, offered them the protection of England, which Jonathan accepted, and hoisted the national flag over his hut. He seemed to have reigned peacefully over his people, namely an old Italian and a Portuguese mulatto; till one day he either drowned himself or was drowned, it is not known which exactly. Then came the year 1816, when Napoleon was imprisoned at St. Helena, and to guard him more securely, the English government placed a garrison in Ascension Isles, and another in Tristan d'Acunha. At

Tristan the garrison consisted of a company of the Cape Artillery and a detachment of Hottentots. In 1821, on the death of Napoleon, the troop was sent back to the Cape.

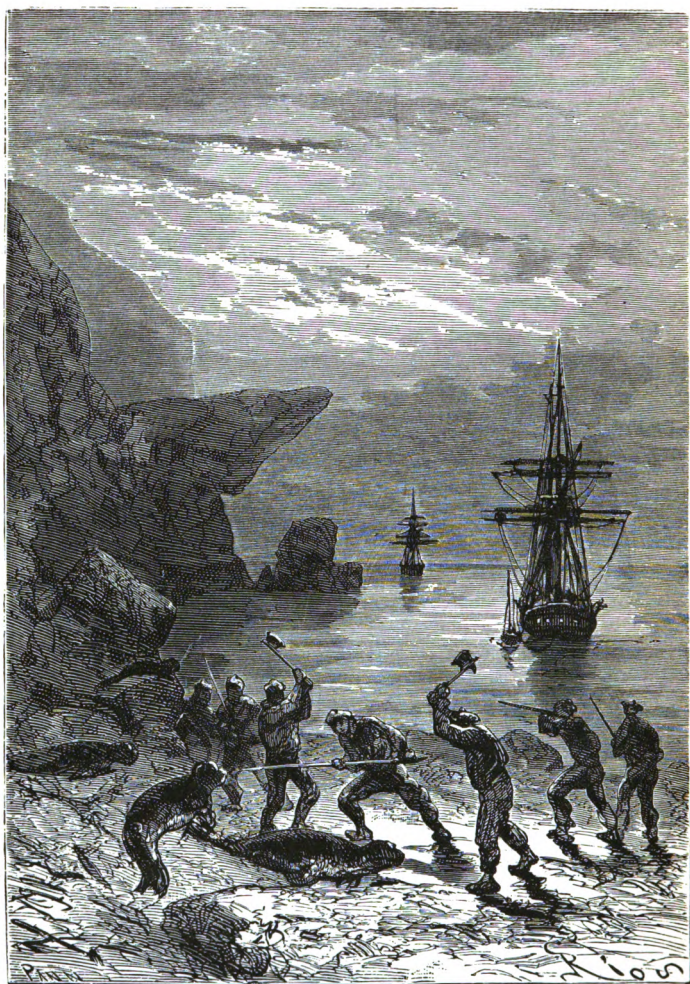
"A solitary European, who was a corporal, and a Scotchman," continued Paganel.

"Ah, a Scotchman!" said the Major, always interested in his countrymen.

"His name was William Glass," said Paganel, "and he remained alone in the island with his wife and two Hottentots. Not long afterwards, two Englishmen, a sailor and a Thames fisherman, and ex-dragoon in the Argentine army, joined the little party, and, in 1821, one of the survivors of the shipwrecked *Blendon Hall* and his young wife took refuge on the island. This raised the number of the inhabitants to six men and two women. In 1829, there were seven men, six women, and fourteen children. In 1835, the number rose to forty, and now the population is trebled."

"That's the way nations originate," observed Glenarvan.

"To complete the history of Tristan d'Acunha, I will add that this island deserves to be called a Robinson Crusoe island as much as Juan Fernandez, for if two sailors were castaways successively on Juan Fernandez, two *savants* narrowly escaped being left on Tristan d'Acunha. In 1793, one of my countrymen, the naturalist Aubert Dupetit-Thouars, carried away by his passion for botanical research, lost himself, and only managed to rejoin his ship at the very moment



“Upwards of fifty large seals were caught.”—P. 23.

the anchor was being lifted. In 1824, one of your compatriots, my dear Glenarvan, a skilful draughtsman, named Augustus Earle, was left on the island for eight months. The captain of his ship had forgotten he was on land, and sailed on to the Cape."

"Well, that's what I call an absent-minded captain," said the Major. "One of your relations, Paganel, no doubt."

"He ought to be if he wasn't," rejoined Paganel.

During the night the crew had such good sport, that upwards of fifty large seals were caught; and as Glenarvan had authorized the chase, he could not but allow his men to make the most of it. The whole of the second day was therefore occupied in dressing the skins, and in preparing the oil of the captured animals, the passengers, meanwhile, making a second excursion round the island. Glenarvan and the Major took their guns with them in hopes of finding game. This promenade extended to the foot of the mountain, over a soil strewn with volcanic *detritus*, and at the foot of the mountain was a chaos of tottering rocks. It would have been impossible to mistake the nature of the enormous cone. As the English Captain Carmichael had justly said, it was an extinct volcano.

Several wild boars were seen by the hunters, one of which was shot down by the Major. Glenarvan contented himself with killing a few brace of black partridges. On the high plateaux, up in the mountain, goats seemed to be very numerous, judging by the occasional glimpses caught of them. As for wild cats,

fierce, proud, powerful creatures, formidable even to dogs, they were in myriads, and bade fair some day to turn out very redoubtable wild beasts.

At eight o'clock every one returned on board, and during the night the *Duncan* set sail, and left the shores of Tristan d'Acunha never again to revisit them.

CHAPTER III.

AMSTERDAM ISLAND.

As John Mangles intended to put in at the Cape of Good Hope for coals, he was obliged to deviate a little from the 37th parallel, and go two degrees north. In less than six days he cleared the thirteen hundred miles which separate the point of Africa from Tristan d'Acunha, and on the 24th of November, at three p.m., the Table Mountain was sighted. At eight o'clock they entered the bay, and cast anchor in the port of Cape Town.

Cape Town, situated at an angle of Table Bay, was founded by the Dutch in 1652. It is the capital of an important colony, which was ceded to the English by the Treaty of 1815. The passengers of the *Duncan* determined to go ashore, and visit it during their stay; but as a single day would be all the time required for coaling, they could not allow themselves more than twelve hours for their perambulations. But this would be long enough to examine the chess-board of houses and streets, arranged with geometrical regularity, known as Cape Town, where thirty thousand inhabitants,

blacks and whites, enact the role of kings and queens, knights and pawns, and perhaps fools. At least this was Paganel's opinion of it. When you have seen the Castle at the south-east of the town, the Government House and Garden, the Exchange, the Museum, and the Stone Cross erected by Barthélemy Diaz at the time of his discovery; and when you have drank a glass of *Pontai*, the first growth of the Constantia wines, there is nothing more to stop for, and so the travellers thought, for they sailed away next morning at daybreak.

Between the Cape and Amsterdam Island there is a distance of 2,900 miles, but, with a good sea and favouring breeze, this was only a ten days' voyage. The elements were now no longer at war with the travellers, as on their journey across the Pampas—air and water seemed in league to help them forward.

“Ah! the sea! the sea!” exclaimed Paganel, “it is the field *par excellence* for the exercise of human energies, and the ship is the true vehicle of civilization. Think, my friends, if the globe had been only an immense continent, the thousandth part of it would still be unknown to us, even in this nineteenth century. See how it is in the interior of great countries. In the steppes of Siberia, in the plains of Central Asia, in the deserts of Africa, in the prairies of America, in the immense wilds of Australia, in the icy solitudes of the Poles, man scarcely dares to venture; the most daring shrinks back, the most courageous succumbs. They cannot penetrate them; the means of transport are insufficient, and the heat and disease, and savage

disposition of the natives, are impassable obstacles. Twenty miles of desert separate men more than five hundred miles of ocean. One coast is neighbour to another, but if only a forest separates, we are strangers. England is contiguous to Australia; while Egypt, for instance, seems to be millions of miles from Senegal, and Pekin at the very antipodes of St. Petersburg! The sea is more easily traversed now than the least Sahara, and it is owing to her, as a learned American has justly said, that a universal relationship has been established among all the nations of the globe."

Paganel spoke with such warmth that even the Major had nothing to say against this panegyric of the ocean. Indeed, if the finding of Harry Grant had involved following a parallel across continents instead of oceans, the enterprise could not have been attempted; but the sea was there ready to carry the travellers from one country to another, and on the 6th of December, at the first streak of the day, they saw a fresh mountain apparently emerging from the bosom of the waves.

This was Amsterdam Island, situated in $37^{\circ} 47'$ latitude and $77^{\circ} 24'$ longitude, the high cone of which in clear weather is visible fifty miles off. At eight o'clock, its form, indistinct though it still was, seemed almost a reproduction of Teneriffe.

"And consequently it must resemble Tristan d'Acunha," observed Glenarvan.

"A very wise conclusion," said Paganel, "according to the geometrographic axiom that two islands resembling a third must have a common likeness. I

will only add that, like Tristan d'Acunha, Amsterdam Island is equally rich in seals and Robinsons."

"There are Robinsons everywhere, then?" said Lady Helena.

"Indeed, Madame," replied Paganel, "I know few islands without some tale of the kind appertaining to them, and the romance of your immortal countryman, Daniel Defoe, has been often enough realized before his day."

"Monsieur Paganel," said Mary, "may I ask you a question?"

"Two if you like, my dear young lady, and I promise to answer them."

"Well, then, I want to know if you would be very much frightened at the idea of being cast away alone on a desert island."

"I?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Come now, my good fellow," said the Major, "don't go and tell us that it is your most cherished desire."

"I don't pretend it is that, but still, after all, such an adventure would not be very unpleasant to me. I should begin a new life; I should hunt and fish; I should choose a grotto for my domicile in winter and a tree in summer; I should make storehouses for my harvests; in one word, I should colonise my island."

"All by yourself?"

"All by myself if I was obliged. Besides, are we ever obliged? Cannot one find friends among the animals, and choose some tame kid, or eloquent parrot,

or amiable monkey? And if a lucky chance should send one a companion, like the faithful Friday, what more is needed? Two friends on a rock, there is happiness. Suppose now the Major and I——”

“Thank you,” replied the Major, interrupting him; “I have no inclination in that line, and should make a very poor Robinson Crusoe.”

“My dear Monsieur Paganel,” said Lady Helena, “you are letting your imagination run away with you, as usual. But the dream is very different from the reality. You are thinking of an imaginary Robinson’s life, thrown on a picked island, and treated like a spoilt child by nature. You only see the sunny side.”

“What, Madame! You don’t believe a man could be happy on a desert island?”

“I do not. Man is made for society, not for solitude, and solitude can only engender despair. It is a question of time. At the outset it is quite possible that material wants, and the very necessities of existence may engross the poor shipwrecked fellow just snatched from the waves, but afterwards, when he feels himself alone, far from his fellow-men, without any hope of seeing country and friends again, what must he think, what must he suffer? His little island is all his world. The whole human race is shut up in himself, and when death comes, which utter loneliness will make terrible, he will be like the last man on the last day of the world. Believe me, Monsieur Paganel, such a man is not to be envied.”

Paganel gave in, though regretfully, to the argu-

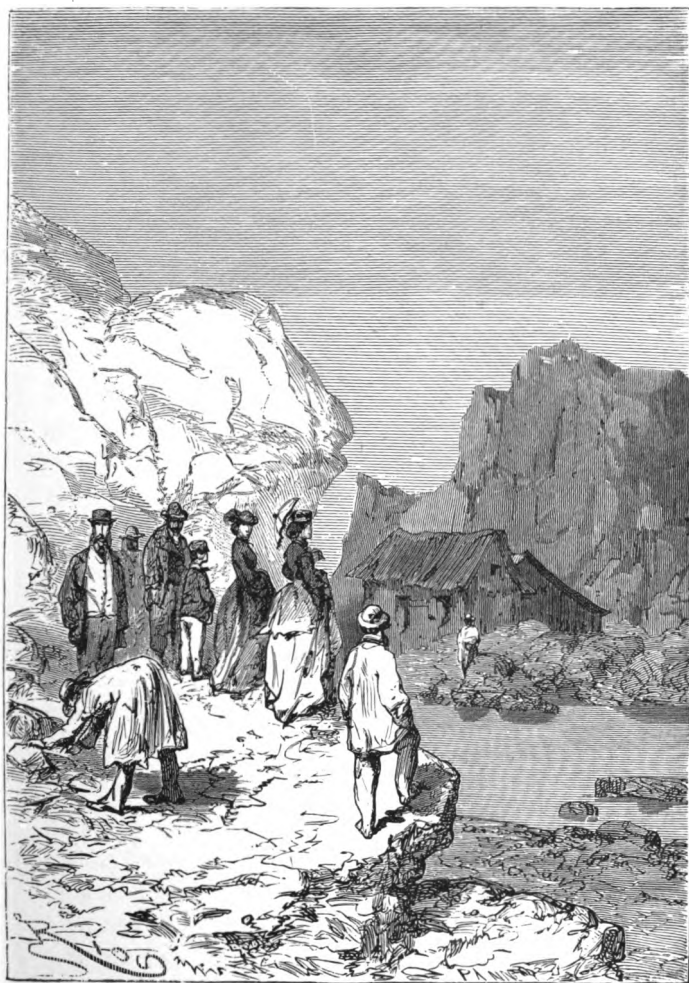
ments of Lady Helena, and still kept up a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of isolation, till the very moment the *Duncan* dropped anchor about a mile off Amsterdam Island.

This lonely group in the Indian Ocean consists of two distinct islands, thirty-three miles apart, and situated exactly on the meridian of the Indian Peninsula. To the north is Amsterdam Island, and to the south St. Paul, but they have been often confounded by geographers and navigators.

These islands were discovered in December, 1796, by the Dutchman, Vlaming, and observed again by Entrecasteaux, who led the *Espérance* and the *Recherche* expedition. It is from this voyage that the confusion of islands dates.

Isle St. Paul lying south of Amsterdam Island, is nothing but an uninhabited islet in the form of a conical mountain, the remains of an ancient volcano. Amsterdam Island, on the contrary, to which the long boat conveyed the passengers of the *Duncan*, is about twelve miles in circumference. It is inhabited by a few voluntary exiles, who have become used to their dreary life. They are the guardians of the fishery which belongs, as well as the islands, to a merchant named Otovan. This sovereign, though not yet recognized by the European powers, enjoys a civil list of 75,000 to 80,000 francs, by fishing, salting, and exporting a little fish called the "cheilodactylus," known also by the less learned name as the *morue de mer*, a sort of dried rock cod.

At the time of the *Duncan's* visit to the island, the



"Inhabited by a few voluntary exiles, who have become used to their dreary life."
P. 30.

population consisted of three people—a Frenchman, and two mulattoes,—all three employed by the merchant proprietor. Paganel was delighted to shake hands with a countryman in the person of the good old Monsieur Viot. He was far advanced in years, but did the honours of the place with much politeness. It was a happy day for him when these kindly strangers touched at his island, for St. Peter's was only frequented by seal-fishers, and now and then a whaler, the crews of which are usually rough, coarse men.

M. Viot presented his subjects, the two mulattoes. They composed the whole living population of the island, except a few wild boars in the interior, and myriads of penguins. The little house where the three solitary men lived was in the heart of a natural bay on the south-east, formed by the crumbling away of a portion of the mountain.

It was long before the reign of Otovan I. that St. Peter served as a refuge for shipwrecked men. Paganel related an interesting story about this, called "The History of Two Scotchmen, cast away on Amsterdam Island."

It was in 1827 that the English ship *Palmyra*, passing within sight of the island, noticed smoke curling in the air, and on approaching the shore, saw two men making signals of distress. The captain lowered a boat and went ashore, and brought them off to his vessel. The two poor fellows were hardly recognizable. One was a young man named James Pain, about twenty-two years of age, and the other was older, a

man about forty, whose name was Robert Proudfoot. For eighteen months they had been almost without food, or fresh water, living on shell-fish, and fishing with an old bent nail. Occasionally they had caught a young wild boar, but for three days at a time had been without food, watching like vestals over the fire which they had lighted with their last piece of tinder, never letting it go out, and carrying it with them in their excursions, as a thing of priceless value. Such was the life of misery, and privation, and suffering which they had led. They had been landed on the island by a schooner engaged in seal fishing. According to the usual custom of seal fishers, they were to remain on the island a month, and collect a supply of oils and skins, till the vessel came back to fetch them away. The schooner, however, never reappeared. Five months afterwards, the *Hope*, bound for Van Diemen's, put in at the island, but her captain, by a barbarous caprice perfectly inexplicable, refused to take the poor Scotchmen on board, and went away without even leaving them a biscuit or a steel to procure them fire. But for the timely arrival of the *Palmyra*, no doubt the unfortunate men must soon have perished.

The second adventure related by Paganel connected with the island, was that of Captain Peron, a Frenchman, who was forty months on it. His story began and ended like the first, but a sanguinary drama marked his sojourn, which presented many curious points of resemblance to the imaginary events which occurred in the history of Defoe's hero.

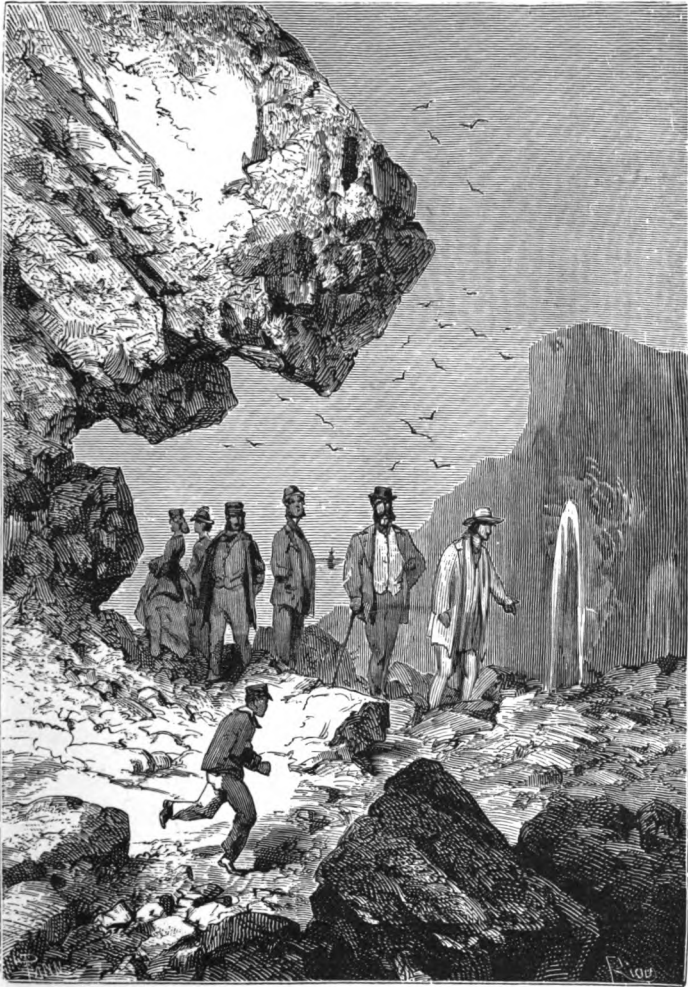
Captain Peron had landed on the island with four sailors, two of them English and two French, intending to hunt sea-lions for fifteen months. They were very successful, but when the fifteen months came to an end, and no vessel returned, and their stock of provisions began to get exhausted, international relations became difficult. The two English sailors mutinied against their captain, and would have killed him but for the interference of his fellow countrymen. From that moment the two parties watched each other night and day, always armed for attack, and alternately conquerors and conquered. In the end one would have slain the other undoubtedly, but happily an English ship took the two men who had commenced the strife about the miserable question of nationality, on a lone rock in the Indian Ocean, away to their own country.

Twice over, then, had Amsterdam Island become the country of deserted sailors, providentially saved from misery and death; but since these events no vessel had been lost on its coast. Had any shipwreck occurred, some fragments must have been thrown on the sandy shore, and any poor sufferers from it would have found their way to M. Viot's fishing-huts. The old man had been long on the island, and had never been called upon to exercise such hospitality. Of the *Britannia* and Captain Grant he knew nothing, but he was certain that the disaster had not happened on Amsterdam Island, nor on the islet called St. Paul, for whalers and fishing-vessels went there constantly, and must have heard of it.

Glenarvan was neither surprised nor vexed at the reply; indeed, his object in asking was rather to establish the fact that Captain Grant had not been there than that he had. This done, they were ready to proceed on their voyage next day.

They rambled about the island till evening, as its appearance was very inviting. Its *fauna* and *flora*, however, were poor in the extreme. The only specimens of quadrupeds, birds, fish, and cetacea, were a few wild boars, stormy petrels, albatrosses, perch, and seals. Here and there thermal springs and chalybeate waters escaped from the black lava, and thin dark vapours rose above the volcanic soil. Some of these springs were very hot. John Mangles held his thermometer in one of them, and found the temperature was 176 degrees Fahrenheit. Fish caught in the sea a few yards off, cooked in five minutes in these all but boiling waters, a fact which made Paganel resolve not to attempt to bathe in them.

Towards evening, after a long promenade, Glenarvan and his party bade adieu to the good old M. Viot, and returned to the yacht, wishing him all the happiness possible on his desert island, and receiving in return the old man's blessing on their expedition.



"Here and there thermal springs escaped from the black lava."—P. 34.

CHAPTER IV.

PAGANEL AND MAJOR MCNABBS LAY A WAGER.

ON the 7th of December, at three a.m., the *Duncan* lay puffing out her smoke in the little harbour ready to start, and a few minutes afterwards the anchor was lifted, and the screw set in motion. By eight o'clock, when the passengers came on deck, the Amsterdam Island had almost disappeared from view behind the mists of the horizon. This was the last halting-place on the route, and nothing now was between them and the Australian coast but three thousand miles' distance. Should the west wind continue but a dozen days longer, and the sea remain favourable, the yacht would have reached the end of her voyage.

Mary Grant and her brother could not gaze without emotion at the waves through which the *Duncan* was speeding her course, when they thought that these very same waves must have dashed against the prow of the *Britannia* but a few days before her shipwreck. Here, perhaps, Captain Grant, with a disabled ship and diminished crew, had struggled against the tremendous hurricanes of the Indian Ocean, and felt himself driven

towards the coast with irresistible force. The captain pointed out to Mary the different currents on the ship's charts, and explained to her their constant direction. Among others, there was one running straight to the Australian continent, and its action is equally felt in the Atlantic and Pacific. It was doubtless against this that the *Britannia*, dismasted and rudderless, had been unable to contend, and consequently been dashed against the coast, and broken in pieces.

A difficulty about this, however, presented itself. The last intelligence of Captain Grant was from Callao on the 30th of May, 1862, as appeared in the "Mercantile and Shipping Gazette." How, then, was it possible that on the 7th of June, only eight days after leaving the shores of Peru, that the *Britannia* could have found herself in the Indian Ocean? But to this, Paganel, who was consulted on the subject, found a very plausible solution.

It was one evening, about six days after their leaving Amsterdam Island, when they were all chatting together on the poop, that the above-named difficulty was started by Glenarvan. Paganel made no reply, but went and fetched the document. After perusing it, he still remained silent, simply shrugging his shoulders, as if ashamed of troubling himself about such a trifle.

"Come, my good friend," said Glenarvan, "at least give us an answer."

"No," replied Paganel, "I'll merely ask a question for Captain John to answer."

"And what is it, Monsieur Paganel?" said John Mangles.

"Could a quick ship make the distance in a month over that part of the Pacific Ocean which lies between America and Australia?"

"Yes, by making two hundred miles in twenty-four hours."

"Would that be an extraordinary rate of speed?"

"Not at all; sailing clippers often go faster."

"Well, then, instead of '7 June' on this document, suppose that one figure has been destroyed by the sea-water, and read '17 June' or '27 June,' and all is explained."

"That's to say," replied Lady Helena, "that between the 31st of May and the 27th of June——"

"Captain Grant could have crossed the Pacific and found himself in the Indian Ocean."

Paganel's theory met with universal acceptance.

"That's one more point cleared up," said Glenarvan. "Thanks to our friend, all that remains to be done now is to get to Australia, and look out for traces of the wreck on the western coast."

"Or the eastern?" said John Mangles.

"Indeed, John, you may be right, for there is nothing in the document to indicate which shore was the scene of the catastrophe, and both points of the continent crossed by the 37th parallel must therefore be explored."

"Then, my Lord, it is doubtful, after all," said Mary.

"Oh! no, Miss Mary," John Mangles hastened to reply, seeing the young girl's apprehension. "His Lordship will please to consider that if Captain Grant had gained the shore on the east of Australia, he would almost immediately have found refuge and assistance. The whole of that coast is English, we might say, peopled with colonists. The crew of the *Britannia* could not have gone ten miles without meeting fellow countrymen."

"I am quite of your opinion, Captain John," said Paganel. "On the eastern coast Harry Grant would not only have found an English colony easily, but he would certainly have met with some means of transport back to Europe."

"And he would not have found the same resources on the side we are making for?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, Madame," replied Paganel. "It is a desert coast, with no communication between it and Melbourne or Adelaide. If the *Britannia* was wrecked on those rocky shores, she was as much cut off from all chance of help as if she had been lost on the inhospitable shores of Africa."

"But what has become of my father there, then, all these two years?" asked Mary Grant.

"My dear Mary," replied Paganel, "you have not the least doubt, have you, that Captain Grant reached the Australian continent after his shipwreck?"

"No, Monsieur Paganel."

"Well, granting that, what became of him? The suppositions we might make are not numerous. They

are confined to three. Either Harry Grant and his companions have found their way to the English colonies, or they have fallen into the hands of the natives, or they are lost in the immense wilds of Australia."

"Go on, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, as the learned Frenchman made a pause.

"The first hypothesis I reject, then, to begin with, for Harry Grant could not have reached the English colonies, or long ago he would have been back with his children in the good town of Dundee."

"Poor father," murmured Mary; "away from us for two whole years!"

"Hush, Mary," said Robert; "Monsieur Paganel will tell us."

"Alas! my boy, I cannot. All that I affirm is that Captain Grant is in the hands of the natives."

"But these natives," said Lady Helena hastily, "are they——"

"Reassure yourself, Madame," said Paganel, divining her thoughts. "The aborigines of Australia are low enough in the scale of human intelligence, and most degraded and uncivilized, but they are mild and gentle in disposition, and not sanguinary like their New Zealand neighbours. Though they may be prisoners, their lives have never been threatened, you may be sure. All travellers are unanimous in declaring that the Australian natives abhor shedding blood, and many a time they have found in them faithful allies in repelling the attacks of evil-disposed convicts far more cruelly inclined."

"You hear what Monsieur Paganel tells us, Mary," said Lady Helena, turning to the young girl. "If your father is in the hands of the natives, which seems probable from the document, we shall find him."

"And what if he is lost in that immense country?" asked Mary.

"Well, we'll find him still," exclaimed Paganel, in a confident tone. "Won't we, friends?"

"Most certainly," replied Glenarvan; and, anxious to give a less gloomy turn to the conversation, he added—

"But I won't admit the supposition of his being lost."

"Neither will I," said Paganel.

"Is Australia a big place?" inquired Robert.

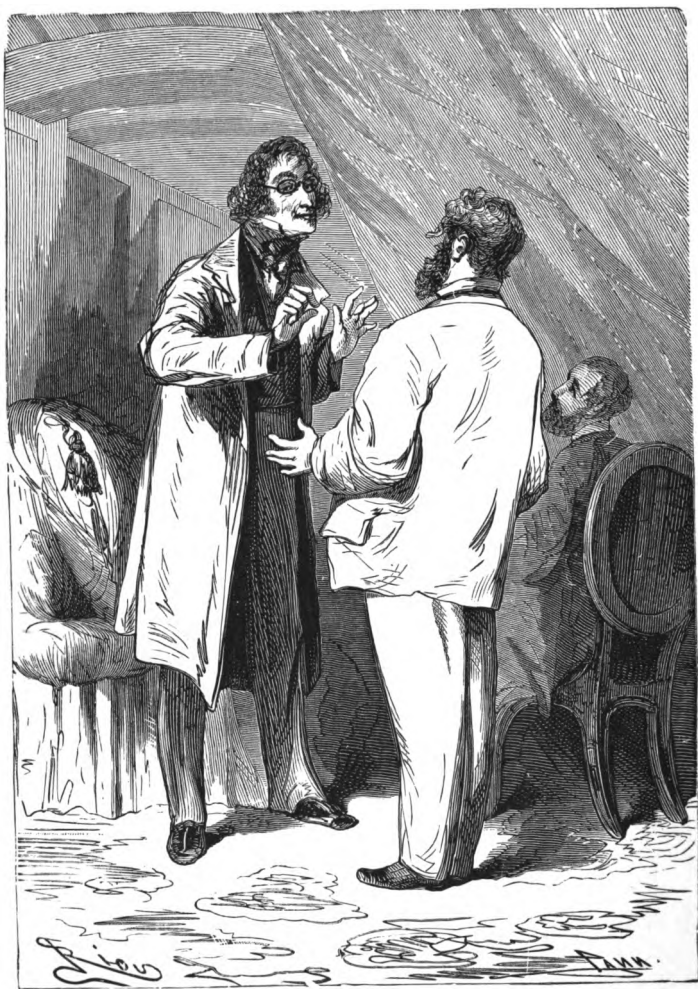
"Australia, my boy, is about as large as four-fifths of Europe. It has somewhere about 775,000 *hectares*."

"So much as that?" said the Major.

"Yes, McNabbs, almost to a yard's breadth. Don't you think now it has a right to be called a continent?"

"I do, certainly."

"I may add," continued the *savant*, "that there are but few accounts of travellers being lost in this immense country. Indeed, I believe Leichardt is the only one of whose fate we are ignorant, and some time before my departure, I learnt from the Geographical Society that McIntyre had strong hopes of having discovered traces of him."



“ ‘Major, will you bet your Purday-Moore rifle against my telescope?’ ”—P. 41.

"The whole of Australia, then, is not yet explored?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, Madame, but very little of it. This continent is not much better known than the interior of Africa, and yet it is from no lack of enterprising travellers. From 1606 to 1862, more than fifty have been engaged in exploring along the coast and in the interior."

"Oh, fifty!" exclaimed McNabbs incredulously.

"Yes, McNabbs, quite that number."

"No, no," objected the Major; "that is going too far."

"And I might go farther, McNabbs," replied the geographer, impatient of contradiction.

"Farther still, Paganel!"

"If you doubt me I can give you the names."

"Oh, oh!" said the Major, coolly. "That's just like you *savants*. You stick at nothing."

"Major, will you bet your Purday-Moore rifle against my telescope?"

"Why not, Paganel, if it would give you any pleasure?"

"Done, Major!" exclaimed Paganel. "You may say good-bye to your rifle, for it will never shoot another chamois or fox unless I lend it to you, which I shall always be happy to do, by the by."

"And whenever you require the use of your telescope, Paganel, I shall be equally obliging," replied the Major, gravely.

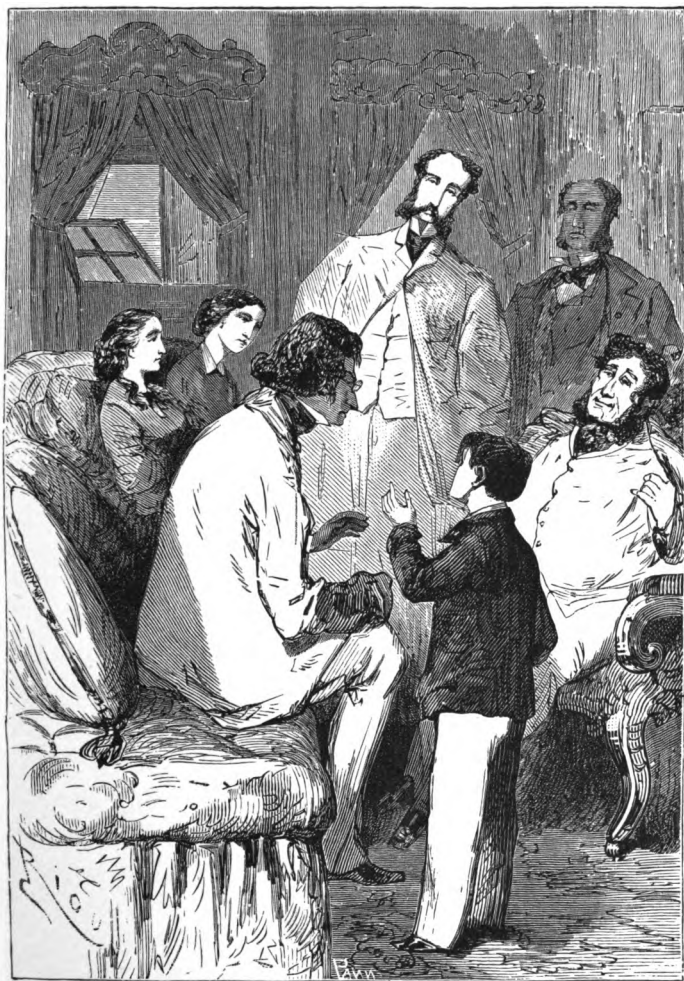
"Let us begin, then; and, ladies and gentlemen, you shall be our jury. Robert, you must keep count."

This was agreed upon, and Paganel forthwith commenced.

"Mnémosyne! Goddess of Memory, chaste mother of the Muses!" he exclaimed, "inspire thy faithful and fervent worshipper! Two hundred and fifty-eight years ago, my friends, Australia was unknown. Strong suspicions were entertained of the existence of a great southern continent. In the library of your British Museum, Glenarvan, there are two charts, the date of which is 1550, which mention a country south of Asia, called the Portuguese Great Java. But these charts are not sufficiently authentic. In the seventeenth century, in 1606, Quiros, a Spanish navigator, discovered a country which he named Australia de Espiritu Santo. Some authors imagine that this was the New Hebrides group, and not Australia. I am not going to discuss the question, however. Count Quiros, Robert, and let us pass on to another."

"One," said Robert.

"In that same year, Louis Vas de Torres, the second in command of the fleet of Quiros, pushed further south. But it is to Theodore Hertoge, a Dutchman, that the honour of the great discovery belongs. He touched the western coast of Australia in 25° latitude, and called it *Eendracht*, after his vessel. From this time navigators increased. In 1618, Zeachen discovered the northern parts of the coast, and called them Arnheim and Diemen. In 1618, Jan Edels went along the western coast, and christened it by his own name. In 1622, Leuwin went down as far as the cape



“‘One!’ said Robert.”—P. 42.

which became his namesake. In 1627, De Nutz, and De Witt, the one at the west the other at the south, completed the discoveries of their predecessors, and are followed by Commander Carpenter, who penetrated with his ships the immense gulf, still called the Gulf of Carpentaria. Finally, in 1642, the famous Tasman rounded Van Diemen's Land, an island which he supposed to be joined to the continent, and gave it the name of the Governor-General of Batavia, a name which posterity justly changed to Tasmania. The whole continent was now fairly rounded. It was known that the Indian and Pacific Oceans washed its shores, and in 1665 the name of New Holland was bestowed on this great island of the south, just about the time when the roll of Dutch navigators was about to end. How many have we now, Robert?"

"Ten," replied the boy.

"Very well. I pass on to the English. In 1686, a pirate captain, the brother of one of the most celebrated freebooters of the southern seas, William Dampier, arrived in his ship, the *Cygnet*, off the northwest coast of New Holland, in latitude 16° 50'. He entered into communication with the natives, and brought home a very complete description of their manners, their poverty, and their intelligence. He came back in 1699 to the same bay where Hertoge had disembarked, but not as a freebooter. He was in command of the *Roebuck*, a ship of the Royal Navy. Up to this time, however, the discovery of New Holland had been simply an interesting geographical fact. No

one thought of colonizing it, and almost for three quarters of a century it remained unvisited by any navigator. But at last came Captain Cook, the most illustrious sailor in the whole world, and it was not long till the new continent became a field for European emigration. It was on the 31st of March, 1770, that Cook first touched the shores of New Holland. After being fortunate enough to witness at Otaheite the transit of Venus across the sun, he sailed his little ship, the *Endeavour*, to the west of the Pacific Ocean. Then he discovered New Zealand, and subsequently reached a bay on the west coast of Australia, which he found so rich in new plants, that he gave it the name of Botanic Bay. Its present name is Botany Bay. From thence he went north, and struck on a coral reef eight leagues from shore, near Cape Tribulation. The danger of sinking was imminent. Provisions and cannon had to be thrown into the sea; but during the night the tide lifted the vessel and set her afloat. It was found that the cause of her not sinking was that a piece of coral had stopped up the hole in the bottom, and Cook succeeded in bringing her safely into a small creek, into which a river fell, which he called the Endeavour. Being obliged to remain there three months for repairs, the English tried to establish relations with the natives, which might prove useful, but they met with little success. On putting out to sea again, the *Endeavour* continued her route north, as Cook wished to find out whether a strait existed between New Guinea, and New Holland. After encountering fresh dangers and

perilling his ship a hundred times, he caught sight of the sea spreading out towards the south-east. This was the strait, and he speedily passed through, and landed on a little island, where he took possession, in the name of England, of the whole extent, giving it the true British name of New South Wales. Three years later the brave sailor commanded the *Adventure* and the *Resolution*, and Captain Furneaux, of the *Adventure*, went to explore the coast of Van Diemen's Land, and brought back word that it was joined to the mainland and formed part of New Holland. It was not till 1777, at the time of his third voyage, that Cook moored his vessels in Adventure Bay, and started, some months afterwards, on a visit to the Sandwich Isles, where he died."

"He was a great man," said Glenarvan.

"The most illustrious sailor that ever breathed. It was Banks, his companion, who suggested to the English Government the idea of turning Botany Bay into a convict settlement. Navigators of all nations followed in his wake. In the last letter received from Prouse, the unfortunate sailor announces his intention of visiting the Gulf of Carpentaria and all the coast of New Holland, as far as Van Diemen's Land. He sets out and never returns. In 1778, Captain Philip founded the first English colony. In 1791, Vancouver went a considerable distance round the southern coast of the new continent. In 1792, d'Entrecasteaux, sent in search of Prouse, made the tour of New Holland, west and south, discovering several unknown islands on

the route. In 1795 and 1797, Flinders and Bass, two young men, in a bark only eight feet long, courageously pushed their way along the southern coast, finding the passage between Van Diemen's Land and New Holland, which is now called Bass's Strait. In that same year, 1797, Vlaming, the discoverer of Amsterdam Island, found, on the eastern shores, the Swan River, the banks of which abound with black swans of the finest species. In 1801, Flinders still further prosecuted his explorations, and met in Encounter Bay two French vessels, the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*, commanded by Captains Baudin and Hamlin."

"Oh, Captain Baudin!" exclaimed the Major.

"Yes, but why do you exclaim?"

"Oh, nothing. Go on."

"Well, I have the name of one more navigator to add to the list—that of Captain King, who in 1817 to 1822 completed the exploration of the intertropical coast of New Holland."

"That makes twenty-four," said Robert.

"Very good, I have half your rifle already, Major. We'll pass to the travellers; I have done with the sailors."

"Capital, Monsieur, Paganel," said Lady Helena. "Really your memory is astonishing."

"Yes," said Lord Glenarvan, "and it is strange enough it should be in a man so——"

"So *distract*," interrupted Paganel. "Oh, I only remember dates and facts, that's all."

"Twenty-four," repeated Robert.

"Well, twenty-five is Lieutenant Dawes. It was

in 1789, a year after the colony of Port Jackson was founded. The tour of the continent had been made, but what it contained no one knew. A long range of mountains, running parallel to the eastern shore, seemed to forbid all approach to the interior. Lieutenant Dawes after a nine days' march, was obliged to turn back and retrace his steps to Port Jackson. During the same year Captain Tench tried to cross the lofty chain, but could not succeed. These two failures deterred other travellers from any attempts for three long years. In 1792, however, Colonel Paterson, a bold African explorer, made a fresh endeavour, which proved equally unsuccessful. But the following year a simple quartermaster in the English navy, the courageous Hawkins, out-distanced all his predecessors, by crossing over the impassable ridge and going twenty miles beyond. He had only two imitators during eighteen years, and these were both unsuccessful. One was Bass, the famous sailor, and the other Bareiller, an engineer in the colony. I pass on now to the year 1813, when a passage was at last discovered to the west of Sydney. Governor McQuarrie ventured through it in 1815, and the town of Bathurst was founded beyond the Blue Mountains. After that I may mention the names of Throsby in 1819; Oxley, who went 300 miles up the country; Howel and Hume, who started from Twofold Bay, which is crossed by the thirty-seventh parallel, and Captain Sturt, who, in 1829 and 1830, discovered the rivers Darling and Murray. All these are men who

enriched geography with new facts, and helped to develop the colonies."

"Thirty-six," said Robert.

"Capital! I'm getting on. There are many other names to recall. Eyre and Leichardt, who explored part of the country in 1840 and 1841; Sturt in 1845; the brothers Gregory and Helpman in 1846 in Western Australia; Kennedy in 1847 on the Victoria River, and in 1848 in Northern Australia; Gregory in 1852; Austin in 1854; the Gregory brothers in 1855 to 1858 in the north-west of the continent; Babbage, the discoverer of Lake Torrens and Lake Eyre; and this brings me to Stuart, a celebrated traveller in the Australian wilds, whose first expedition into the interior was in 1860. By and by I will tell you, if you like, how Australia has been traversed four times from south to north; but for the present I will finish my long list of courageous pioneers of science by adding the names of the Dempsters, and of Clarkson and Harper, Burke and Wills, Neilson, Walker, Landsborough, McKinlay, Howitt."

"Fifty-six," called out Robert.

"Now, then, Major, I will give you good measure, for I have not yet mentioned Duperrey, Bougainville, Fitzroy, Wickham, Stokes——"

"Oh, enough!" cried the Major, overpowered by the numbers.

"Nor Peron, nor Quoy," Paganel went on, dashing along like an express train, "nor Bennett, nor Cunningham, nor Nutchell, nor Tiris——"

"Oh, Paganel, have mercy on us!"

"Nor Dixon, nor Strelesky, nor Reid, nor Wilkes, nor Mitchell——"

"Stop, Paganel," said Glenarvan, laughing heartily, "don't quite crush poor McNabbs. Be generous; he owns he is vanquished."

"And what about the rifle?" asked the geographer, triumphantly.

"It is yours, Paganel," replied the Major, "and I am very sorry for it; but your memory might gain an armoury."

"It is certainly impossible to be better acquainted with Australia; not the least name, not even the most trifling fact——"

"As to the most trifling fact, I don't know about that," said the Major, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, McNabbs?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Simply that perhaps all the incidents connected with the discovery of Australia may not be known to you."

"Just fancy!" retorted Paganel, throwing back his head proudly.

"Come now. If I name one fact you don't know, will you give me back my rifle?" said McNabbs.

"On the spot, Major."

"Very well, it's a bargain, then."

"Yes, a bargain; that's settled."

"All right. Well now, Paganel, do you know how it is that Australia does not belong to France?"

“But it seems to me——”

“Or, at any rate, do you know what’s the reason the English give?” asked the Major.

“No,” replied Paganel, with an air of vexation.

“Just because Captain Baudin, who was by no means a timid man, was so afraid in 1802, of the croaking of the Australian frogs, that he raised his anchor with all possible speed, and quitted the coast, never to return.”

“What!” exclaimed Paganel. “Do they actually give that version of it in England? but it is just a bad joke.”

“Bad enough, certainly, but still it is history in the United Kingdom.”

“It’s an insult!” exclaimed the patriotic geographer; “and they relate that gravely?”

“I must own it is the case,” replied Glenarvan, amidst a general outburst of laughter. “Do you mean to say you have never heard of it before?”

“Never! But I protest against it. Besides, the English call us ‘frog-eaters.’ Now, in general, people are not afraid of what they eat.”

“It is said, though, for all that,” replied McNabbs. So the Major kept his famous rifle after all.

CHAPTER V.

A HURRICANE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

Two days after this conversation, John Mangles announced that the *Duncan* was in longitude $113^{\circ} 37'$, and the passengers found on consulting the chart that consequently Cape Bernouilli could not be more than five degrees off. They must be sailing then in that part of the Indian Ocean which washed the Australian continent, and in four days might hope to see Cape Bernouilli appear on the horizon.

Hitherto the yacht had been favoured by a strong westerly breeze, but now there were evident signs that a calm was impending, and on the 13th of December the wind fell entirely; as the sailors say, there was not enough to fill a cap.

There was no saying how long this state of the atmosphere might last. But for the powerful propeller the yacht would have been obliged to lie motionless as a log. The young captain was very much annoyed, however, at the prospect of emptying his coal-bunkers, for he had covered his ship with canvas, intending to take advantage of the slightest breeze.

“After all, though,” said Glenarvan, with whom he

was talking over the subject, "it is better to have no wind than a contrary one."

"Your Lordship is right," replied John Mangles; "but the fact is these sudden calms bring change of weather, and this is why I dread them. We are close on the trade winds, and if we get them ever so little in our teeth, it will delay us greatly."

"Well, John, what if it does? It will only make our voyage a little longer."

"Yes, if it does not bring a storm with it."

"Do you mean to say, you think we are going to have bad weather?" replied Glenarvan, examining the sky, which from horizon to zenith seemed absolutely cloudless.

"I do," returned the captain. "I may say so to your Lordship, but I should not like to alarm Lady Glenarvan or Miss Grant."

"You are acting wisely; but what makes you uneasy?"

"Sure indications of a storm. Don't trust, my Lord, to the appearance of the sky. Nothing is more deceitful. For the last two days, the barometer has been falling in a most ominous manner, and is now at 27°. This is a warning I dare not neglect, for there is nothing I dread more than storms in the Southern Seas; I have had a taste of them already. The vapours which become condensed in the immense glaciers at the South Pole produce a current of air of extreme violence. This causes a struggle between the polar and equatorial winds, which results in cyclones,

tornadoes, and all those multiplied varieties of tempest against which a ship is no match."

"Well, John," said Glenarvan, "the *Duncan* is a good ship, and her captain is a brave sailor. Let the storm come, we'll meet it!"

John Mangles remained on deck the whole night, for though as yet the sky was still unclouded, he had such faith in his weather-glass, that he took every precaution that prudence could suggest. About 11 p.m. the sky began to darken in the south, and the crew were called up, and all the sails hauled in, except the foresail, brigantine, topsail, and jib-boom. At midnight the wind freshened, and before long the cracking of the masts, and the rattling of the cordage, and groaning of the timbers, awakened the passengers, who speedily made their appearance on deck—at least Paganel, Glenarvan, the Major and Robert.

"Is it the hurricane?" asked Glenarvan quietly.

"Not yet," replied the captain; "but it is close at hand."

And he went on giving his orders to the men, and doing his best to make ready for the storm, standing like an officer commanding a breach with his face to the wind, and his gaze fixed on the troubled sky.

The glass had fallen to 26°, and the hand pointed to tempest.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Lady Helena and Miss Grant ventured upstairs on deck. But they no sooner made their appearance than the captain hurried towards them, and begged them to go

below again immediately. The waves were already beginning to dash over the side of the ship, and the sea might any moment sweep right over her from stem to stern. The noise of the warring elements was so great that his words were scarcely audible, but Lady Helena took advantage of a sudden lull to ask if there was any danger.

"None whatever," replied John Mangles; "but you cannot remain on deck, Madam, no more can Miss Mary."

The ladies could not disobey an order that seemed almost an entreaty, and they returned to their cabin. At the same moment the wind redoubled its fury, making the masts bend beneath the weight of the sails, and completely lifting up the yacht.

"Haul up the foresail!" shouted the captain. "Lower the topsail and jib-boom!"

Glenarvan and his companions stood silently gazing at the struggle between their good ship and the waves, lost in wondering and half-terrified admiration at the spectacle.

Just then, a dull hissing was heard above the noise of the elements. The steam was escaping violently, not by the funnel, but from the safety-valves of the boiler; the alarm whistle sounded unnaturally loud, and the yacht made a frightful pitch, overturning Wilson, who was at the wheel, by an unexpected blow from the tiller. The *Duncan* no longer obeyed the helm.

"What is the matter?" cried the captain rushing on the bridge.

"The ship is heeling over on her side," replied Wilson.

"The engine ! the engine !" shouted the engineer.

Away rushed John to the engine-room. A cloud of steam filled the room. The pistons were motionless in their cylinders, and they were apparently powerless, and the engine-driver, fearing for his boilers, was letting off the steam.

"What's wrong?" asked the captain.

"The propeller is bent or entangled," was the reply.
"It's not acting at all."

"Can't you extricate it?"

"It is impossible"

An accident like this could not be remedied, and John's only resource was to fall back on his sails, and seek to make an auxiliary of his most powerful enemy, the wind.

He went up again on deck, and after explaining in a few words to Lord Glenarvan how things stood, begged him to retire to his cabin, with the rest of the passengers. But Glenarvan wished to remain above.

"No, your Lordship," said the captain, in a firm tone. "I must be alone with my men. Go into the saloon. The vessel will have a hard fight with the waves, and they would sweep you over without mercy."

"But we might be a help."

"Go in, my Lord, go in. I must indeed insist on it. There are times when I must be master on board, and retire you must."

Their situation must indeed be desperate for John

Mangles to speak in such authoritative language. Glenarvan was wise enough to understand this, and felt he must set an example in obedience. He therefore quitted the deck immediately with his three companions, and rejoined the ladies, who were anxiously watching the *dénouement* of this war with the elements.

"He's an energetic fellow, this brave John of mine!" said Lord Glenarvan, as he entered the saloon.

"That he is," replied Paganel. "He reminds me of your great Shakespeare's boatswain in the 'Tempest,' who says to the king on board:—'Hence! What care these roarers for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not.'"

However, John Mangles did not lose a second in extricating his ship from the peril in which she was placed by the condition of her screw propeller. He resolved to rely on the mainsail for keeping in the right route as far as possible, and to brace the yards obliquely, so as not to present a direct front to the storm. The yacht turned about like a swift horse that feels the spur, and presented a broadside to the billows. The only question was, how long would she hold out with so little sail, and what sail could resist such violence for any length of time. The great advantage of keeping up the mainsail was that it presented to the waves only the most solid portions of the yacht, and kept her in the right course. Still it involved some peril, for the vessel might get engulfed between the waves, and not be able to raise herself. But Mangles felt there was no alternative, and all he could do was to

keep the crew ready to alter the sail at any moment, and stay in the shrouds himself watching the tempestuous sea.

The remainder of the night was spent in this manner, and it was hoped that morning would bring a calm. But this was a delusive hope. At 8 a.m. the wind had increased to a hurricane.

John said nothing, but he trembled for his ship, and those on board. The *Duncan* made a frightful plunge forward, and for an instant the men thought she would never rise again. Already they had seized their hatchets to cut away the shrouds from the main-mast, but the next minute the sails were torn away by the tempest, and had flown off like gigantic albatrosses.

The yacht had risen once more, but she found herself at the mercy of the waves entirely now, with nothing to steady or direct her, and was so fearfully pitched and tossed about that every moment the captain expected the masts would break short off. John had no resource but to put up a forestay sail, and run before the gale. But this was no easy task. Twenty times over he had all his work to begin again, and it was 3 p.m. before his attempt succeeded. A mere shred of canvas though it was, it was enough to drive the *Duncan* forward with inconceivable rapidity to the north-east, of course in the same direction as the hurricane. Swiftmess was their only chance of safety. Sometimes she would get in advance of the waves which carried her along, and cutting through them

with her sharp prow, bury herself in their depths. At others, she would keep pace with them, and make such enormous leaps that there was imminent danger of her being pitched over on her side, and then again every now and then the storm-driven sea would out-distance the yacht, and the angry billows would sweep over the deck from stem to stern with tremendous violence.

In this alarming situation and amid dreadful alternations of hope and despair, the 12th of December passed away and the ensuing night. John Mangles never left his post, not even to take food. Though his impassive face betrayed no symptoms of fear, he was tortured with anxiety, and his steady gaze was fixed on the north, as if trying to pierce through the thick mists that enshrouded it.

There was, indeed, great cause for fear. The *Duncan* was out of her course, and rushing towards the Australian coast with a speed which nothing could lessen. To John Mangles it seemed as if a thunderbolt were driving them along. Every instant he expected the yacht would dash against some rock, for he reckoned the coast could not be more than twelve miles off, and better far be in mid ocean exposed to all its fury than too near land.

John Mangles went to find Glenarvan, and had a private talk with him about their situation, telling him frankly the true state of affairs, stating the case with all the coolness of a sailor prepared for anything and everything and he wound up by saying he might, perhaps, be obliged to cast the yacht on shore.



" Every now and then the storm-driven sea would outdistance the yacht."—P. 58.

"To save the lives of those on board, my Lord," he added.

"Do it then, John," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"And Lady Helena? Miss Grant?"

"I will tell them at the last moment when all hope of keeping out at sea is over. You will let me know?"

"I will, my Lord."

Glenarvan rejoined his companions, who felt they were in imminent danger, though no word was spoken on the subject. Both ladies displayed great courage, fully equal to any of the party. Paganel descanted in the most inopportune manner about the direction of atmospheric currents, making interesting comparisons between tornadoes, cyclones, and rectilinear tempests. The Major calmly awaited the end with the fatalism of a Mussulman.

About eleven o'clock, the hurricane appeared to decrease slightly. The damp mist began to clear away, and a sudden gleam of light revealed a low-lying shore about six miles distant. They were driving right down on it. Enormous breakers fifty feet high were dashing over it, and the fact of their height showed John there must be solid ground before they could make such a rebound.

"Those are sand-banks," he said to Austin.

"I think they are," replied the mate.

"We are in God's hands," said John. "If we cannot find any opening for the yacht, and if she doesn't find the way in herself, we are lost."

"The tide is high at present, it is just possible we may ride over those sand-banks."

"But just see those breakers. What ship could stand them? Let us invoke divine aid, Austin!"

Meanwhile the *Duncan* was speeding on at a frightful rate. Soon she was within two miles of the sand-banks, which were still veiled from time to time in thick mist. But John fancied he could see beyond the breakers a quiet basin, where the *Duncan* would be in comparative safety. But how could she reach it?

All the passengers were summoned on deck, for now that the hour of shipwreck was at hand, the captain did not wish anyone to be shut up in his cabin.

"John!" said Glenarvan in a low voice to the captain, "I will try to save my wife or perish with her. I put Miss Grant in your charge."

"Yes, my Lord," replied John Mangles, raising Glenarvan's hand to his moistened eyes.

The yacht was only a few cables' lengths from the sand-banks. The tide was high, and no doubt there was abundance of water to float the ship over the dangerous bar; but these terrific breakers alternately lifting her up and then leaving her almost dry, would infallibly make her graze the sand-banks.

Was there no means of calming this angry sea?

A last expedient struck the captain.

"The oil, my lads?" he exclaimed. "Bring the oil here!"

The crew caught at the idea immediately; this was



"Instantly a sheet of oil covered the whole surface of the water."—P. 61.

a plan that had been successfully tried already. The fury of the waves had been allayed before this by covering them with a sheet of oil. Its effect is immediate, but very temporary. The moment after a ship has passed over the smooth surface, the sea redoubles its violence, and woe to the bark that follows.

The casks of seal-oil were forthwith hauled up, for danger seemed to have given the men double strength. A few hatchet blows soon knocked in the heads, and they were then hung over the larboard and starboard.

"Be ready!" shouted John, looking out for a favourable moment.

In twenty seconds the yacht reached the bar. Now was the time.

"Pour out!" cried the captain, "and God prosper it!"

The barrels were turned upside down, and instantly a sheet of oil covered the whole surface of the water. The billows fell as if by magic, the whole foaming sea seemed levelled, and the *Duncan* flew over its tranquil bosom into a quiet basin beyond the formidable bar; but almost the same minute the ocean burst forth again with all its fury, and the towering breakers dashed over the bar with increased violence.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPE BERNOUILLI.

THE captain's first care was to anchor his vessel securely. He found excellent moorage in five fathoms' depth of water, with a solid bottom of hard granite, which afforded a firm hold. There was no danger now of either being driven away or stranded at low water. After so many hours of danger, the *Duncan* found herself in a sort of creek, sheltered by a high circular point from the winds outside in the open sea.

Lord Glenarvan grasped John Mangles' hand, and simply said—

“Thank you, John.”

This was all, but John felt it ample recompense. Glenarvan kept to himself the secret of his anxiety, and neither Lady Helena, nor Mary, nor Robert suspected the grave perils they had just escaped.

One important fact had to be ascertained. On what part of the coast had the tempest thrown them? How far must they go to regain the parallel? At what distance S.W. was Cape Bernouilli? This was soon determined by taking the position of the ship,

and it was found that she had scarcely deviated two degrees from the route. They were in longitude $36^{\circ} 12'$, and latitude $35^{\circ} 67'$, at Cape Catastrophe, three hundred miles from Cape Bernouilli.

Cape Catastrophe, an ominous sounding name, has for its companion Cape Borda, formed by a promontory of Kangaroo Island. Between these two capes is Investigator Strait, which leads to two considerably deep gulfs—Gulf Spencer in the north, and Gulf St. Vincent in the south. On the eastern coast is the port of Adelaide, the capital of Southern Australia. This city, founded in 1836, numbers forty thousand inhabitants, and is a tolerably large emporium of commerce; but the people are too much taken up with the cultivation of their fertile soil, and with looking after their grapes and oranges, and all their agricultural wealth, to occupy themselves with great industrial enterprises. The population comprises fewer engineers than agriculturists, and the whole current of popular thought runs neither in the direction of commercial operations nor mechanical arts.

Could the *Duncan* be repaired there? This was the question. The extent of the injuries must first be ascertained, and in order to do this he ordered some of the men to dive down below the stern. Their report was that one of the branches of the screw was bent, and had got jammed against the stern post, which, of course, prevented all possibility of rotation. This was a serious damage, so serious as to require more skilful workmen than could be found in Adelaide.

After mature reflection, Lord Glenarvan and John Mangles came to the determination to sail round the Australian coast, stopping at Cape Bernouilli, and continuing their route south as far as Melbourne, where the *Duncan* could speedily be put right. This effected, they would proceed to cruise along the eastern coast to complete their search for the *Britannia*.

This decision was unanimously approved, and it was agreed that they should start with the first fair wind. They had not to wait long, for the same night the hurricane had ceased entirely, and there was only a manageable breeze from the S.W. Preparations for sailing were instantly commenced, and at four o'clock in the morning the crew lifted the anchors, and got under weigh with fresh canvas outspread, and a wind blowing right for the Australian shores.

Two hours afterwards Cape Catastrophe was out of sight. In the evening they doubled Cape Borda, and came alongside Kangaroo Island. This is the largest of the Australian islands, and a great hiding-place for runaway convicts. Its appearance was enchanting. The stratified rocks on the shore were richly carpeted with verdure, and innumerable kangaroos were jumping over the woods and plains, just as at the time of its discovery in 1802. Next day, boats were sent ashore to examine the coast minutely, as they were now on the 36th parallel, and between that and the 38th Glenarvan wished to leave no part unexplored.

On the 18th of December; the *Duncan* which flew along before the wind like a regular clipper, sailed close

past Encounter Bay. It was here that in 1828 the traveller Sturt came after he had discovered the Murray, the largest river in South Australia. The shores of this bay presented a complete contrast to the green slopes of Kangaroo Island, being low and barren, and much indented, the monotonous outline only occasionally broken by a grey cliff or a sandy promontory. Indeed, in point of gloomy sterility, it might have been a polar continent.

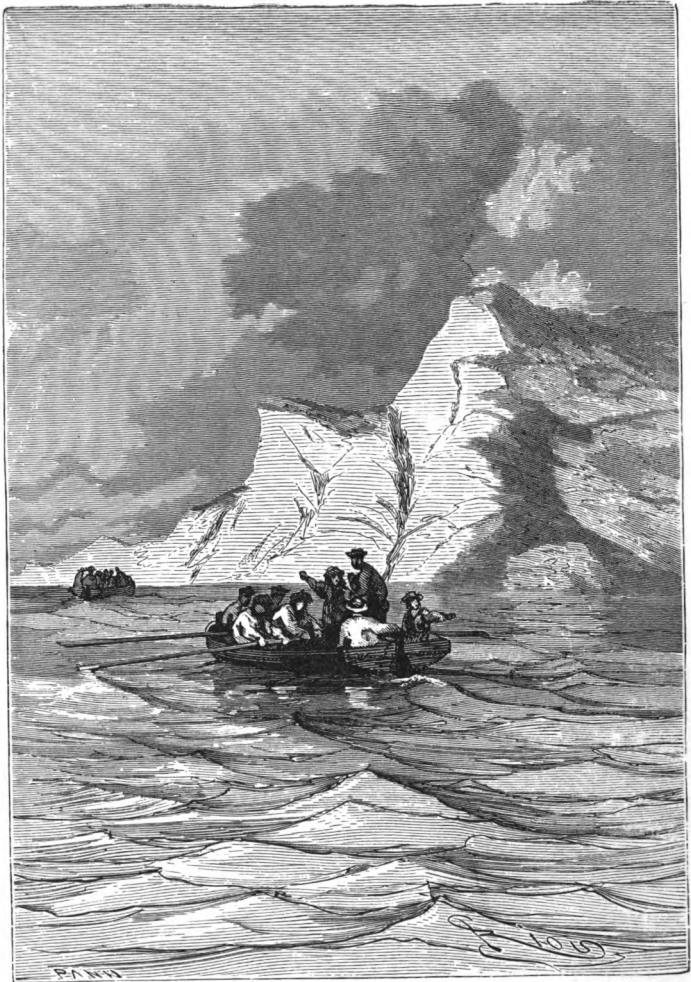
The boats had hard rough work of it now, but the men never complained. Glenarvan and his inseparable companion, Paganel, and young Robert generally accompanied them. But all this painstaking exploration came to nothing. Not a trace of the shipwreck could be seen anywhere. The Australian shores revealed no more than the Patagonian. However, it was not time yet to lose hope altogether, for they had not reached the exact point indicated by the document.

On the 20th of December, they arrived off Cape Bernouilli, which terminates Lacedpede Bay, and yet not a vestige of the *Britannia* had been discovered. Still this was not surprising, as it was two years since the occurrence of the catastrophe, and the sea might, and indeed must, have scattered and destroyed whatever fragments of the brig had remained. Besides, the natives who scent a wreck as the vultures do a dead body, would have pounced upon and carried off the smallest *débris*. There was no doubt whatever Harry Grant and his companions had been made prisoners the moment the waves threw them on shore, and been dragged away into the interior of the continent.

But if so, what becomes of Paganel's ingenious hypothesis about the document? viz., that it had been thrown into a river and carried by the current into the sea. That was a plausible enough theory in Patagonia, but not in the part of Australia intersected by the 37th parallel. Besides the Patagonian rivers, the Rio Colorado, the Rio Negro, flow into the sea along desert solitudes, uninhabited and uninhabitable; while, on the contrary, the principal rivers of Australia—the Murray, the Yarrow, the Torrens, the Darling—all connected with each other, throw themselves into the ocean by well-frequented routes, and their mouths are ports of great activity. What likelihood, consequently, would there be that a fragile bottle would ever find its way along such busy thoroughfares right out into the Indian Ocean?

Paganel himself saw the impossibility of it, and confessed to the Major, who raised a discussion on the subject, that his hypothesis would be altogether illogical in Australia. It was evident that the degrees given related to the place where the *Britannia* was actually shipwrecked, and not to the place of captivity, and that the bottle therefore had been thrown into the sea on the western coast of the continent.

However, as Glenarvan justly remarked, this did not alter the fact of Captain Grant's captivity in the least degree, though there was no reason now for prosecuting the search for him along the 37th parallel, more than any other. It followed, consequently, that if no traces of the *Britannia* were discovered at Cape



"Land was quite close now."—P. 67.

Bernouilli, the only thing to be done was to return to Europe. Lord Glenarvan would have been unsuccessful, but he would have done his duty courageously and conscientiously.

But the young Grants did not feel disheartened. They had long since said to themselves that the question of their father's deliverance was about to be finally settled. Irrevocably, indeed, they might consider it, for as Paganel had judiciously demonstrated, if the wreck had occurred on the eastern side, the survivors would have found their way back to their own country long since.

"Hope on! Hope on, Mary!" said Lady Helena to the young girl, as they neared the shore; "God's hand will still lead us."

"Yes, Miss Mary," said Captain John. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When one way is hedged up, another is sure to open."

"God grant it," replied Mary.

Land was quite close now. The cape ran out two miles into the sea, and terminated in a gentle slope, and the boat glided easily into a sort of natural creek between coral banks in a state of formation, which in course of time would be a belt of coral reefs round the southern point of the Australian coast. Even now they were quite sufficiently formidable to destroy the keel of a ship, and the *Britannia* might likely enough have been dashed to pieces on them.

The passengers landed without the least difficulty on an absolutely desert shore. Cliffs composed of beds

of strata made a coast-line sixty to eighty feet high, which it would have been difficult to scale without ladders or cramp-irons. John Mangles happened to discover a natural breach about half a mile south. Part of the cliff had been partially beaten down, no doubt, by the sea in some great equinoctial gale. Through this opening the whole party passed and reached the top of the cliff by a pretty steep path. Robert climbed like a young cat, and was first on the summit, to the despair of Paganel, who was quite ashamed to see his long legs, forty years old, out-distanced by a young urchin of twelve. However, he was far ahead of the Major, who gave himself no concern on the subject.

They were all soon assembled on the lofty crags, and from this elevation could command a view of the whole plain below. It appeared entirely uncultivated, and covered with shrubs and bushes. Glenarvan thought it resembled some of the glens in the lowlands of Scotland, and Paganel fancied it like some barren parts of Brittany. But along the coast the country appeared to be inhabited, and significant signs of industry revealed the presence of civilized men, not savages.

“A mill!” exclaimed Robert.

And, sure enough, in the distance the long sails of a mill appeared, apparently about three miles off.

“It certainly is a windmill,” said Paganel after examining the object in question through his telescope.

“Let us go to it, then,” said Glenarvan.

Away they started, and, after walking about half



“ A plain, comfortable dwelling-house, crowned by the joyous-sounding mill.”
P. 60.

an hour, the country began to assume a new aspect, suddenly changing its sterility for cultivation. Instead of bushes, quick-set hedges met the eye, enclosing recent clearings. Several bullocks and about half a dozen horses were feeding in meadows, surrounded by acacias supplied from the vast plantations of Kangaroo Island. Gradually fields covered with cereals came in sight, whole acres covered with bristling ears of corn, hay-ricks in the shape of large bee-hives, blooming orchards, a fine garden worthy of Horace, in which the useful and agreeable were blended; then came sheds; commons wisely distributed, and, last of all, a plain comfortable dwelling-house, crowned by a joyous-sounding mill, and fanned and shaded by its long sails as they kept constantly moving round.

Just at that moment a pleasant-faced man, about fifty years of age, came out of the house, warned by the loud barking of four dogs, of the arrival of strangers. He was followed by five handsome strapping lads, his sons, and their mother, a fine tall woman. There was no mistaking the little group. This was a perfect type of the Irish colonist—a man who, weary of the miseries of his country, had come, with his family, to seek fortune and happiness beyond the seas.

Before Glenarvan and his party had time to reach the house, and present themselves in due form, they heard the cordial words—

“ Strangers ! welcome to the house of Paddy O'Moorc ! ”

"You are Irish," said Glenarvan, "if I am not mistaken," warmly grasping the out-stretched hand of the colonist.

"I was," replied Paddy O'Moore, "but now I am Australian. Come in, gentlemen, whoever you may be, this house is yours."

It was impossible not to accept an invitation given with such grace. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were led in by Mrs. O'Moore, while the gentlemen were assisted by his sturdy sons to disencumber themselves of their fire-arms.

An immense hall, light and airy, occupied the ground floor of the house, which was built of strong planks laid horizontally. A few wooden benches fastened against the gaily-coloured walls, about ten stools, two oak chests on which there was a display of white earthenware and shining tin mugs, a large long table where twenty guests could sit comfortably, composed the furniture, which looked in perfect keeping with the solid house and robust inmates.

The noonday meal was spread; the soup tureen was smoking between roast beef and a leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes, and oranges. The necessary was there, and there was no lack of the superfluous. The host and hostess were so pleasant, and the big table, with its abundant fare, looked so inviting, that it would have been ungracious not to have seated themselves. The farm-servants, on equal footing with their master, were already in their places to take their share of the meal. Paddy O'Moore

pointed to the seats reserved for the strangers, and said to Glenarvan,

“I was waiting for you.”

“Waiting for us!” replied Glenarvan in a tone of surprise.

“I am always waiting for those who come,” said the Irishman; and then, in a solemn voice, while the family and domestics reverently stood, he repeated the *Benedicite*.

Dinner followed immediately, during which an animated conversation was kept up on all sides. From Scotch to Irish is but a handsbreadth. The Tweed, several fathoms wide, digs a deeper trench between Scotland and England than the twenty leagues of Irish Channel which separates Old Caledonia from the Emerald Isle. Paddy O'Moore related his history. It was that of all emigrants driven by misfortune from their own country. Many come to seek fortunes who only find trouble and sorrow, and then they throw the blame on chance, and forget that the true cause is their own idleness, and vice, and want of common sense. Whoever is sober and courageous, honest and economical, gets on.

Such a one had been and was Paddy O'Moore. He left Dundalk, where he was starving, and came with his family to Australia, landed at Adelaide, where, refusing employment as a miner, he got engaged on a farm, and two months afterwards commenced clearing ground on his own account.

The whole territory of South Australia is divided

into lots, each containing eighty acres, and these are granted to colonists by the government. Any industrious man, by proper cultivation, can not only get a living out of his lot, but lay by £80 a year.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. He profited by his own former experience, and laid by every penny he could till he had saved enough to purchase new lots. His family prospered, and his farm also. The Irish peasant became a landed proprietor, and though his little estate had only been under cultivation for two years, he had five hundred acres cleared by his own hands, and five hundred head of cattle. He was his own master, after having been a serf in Europe, and as independent as one can be in the freest country in the world.

His guests congratulated him heartily as he ended his narration; and Paddy O'Moore no doubt expected confidence for confidence, but he waited in vain. However, he was one of those discreet people who can say, "I tell you who I am, but I don't ask who you are." Glenarvan's great object was to get information about the *Britannia*, and like a man who goes right to the point, he began at once to interrogate O'Moore as to whether he had heard of the shipwreck?

The reply of the Irishman was not favourable; he had never heard the vessel mentioned. For two years, at least, no ship had been wrecked on that coast, neither above nor below the Cape. Now the date of the catastrophe was within two years. He could, therefore, declare positively that the survivors of the

wreck had not been thrown on that part of the western shore.

“Now, my Lord,” he added “may I ask what interest you have in making the inquiry?”

This pointed question elicited in reply the whole history of the expedition. Glenarvan related the discovery of the document, and the various attempts that had been made to follow up the precise indications given of the whereabouts of the unfortunate captives; and he concluded his account by expressing his doubt whether they should ever find the Captain after all.

His dispirited tone made a painful impression on the minds of his auditors. Robert and Mary could not keep back their tears, and Paganel had not a word of hope or comfort to give them. John Mangles was grieved to the heart, though he, too, was beginning to yield to the feeling of hopelessness which had crept over the rest, when suddenly the whole party were electrified by hearing a voice exclaim—

“My Lord, praise and thank God! if Captain Grant is alive, he is on this Australian continent!”

CHAPTER VII.

AYRTON.

THE surprise caused by these words cannot be described. Glenarvan sprang to his feet, and pushing back his seat, exclaimed—

“Who spoke?”

“I did,” said one of the servants, at the far end of the table.

“You, Ayrton!” replied his master, not less bewildered than Glenarvan.

“Yes, it was I,” rejoined Ayrton in a firm tone, though somewhat agitated voice. “A Scotchman like yourself, my Lord, and one of the shipwrecked crew of the *Britannia*.”

The effect of such a declaration may be imagined. Mary Grant fell back, half-fainting, in Lady Helena’s arms, overcome by joyful emotion, and Robert, and Mangles, and Paganel started up and rushed towards the man that Paddy O’Moore had addressed as *Ayrton*. He was a coarse-looking fellow, about forty-five years of age, with very bright eyes, though half-hidden beneath thick, overhanging brows. In spite of extreme leanness

there was an air of unusual strength about him. He seemed all bone and nerves, or, to use a Scotch expression, as if he had not wasted time in making fat. He was broad-shouldered and of middle height, and though his features were coarse, his face was so full of intelligence, and energy, and decision, that he gave one a favourable impression. The interest he excited was still further heightened by the marks of recent suffering imprinted on his countenance. It was evident that he had endured long and severe hardships, and that he had borne them bravely and come off victor.

"You are one of the shipwrecked sailors of the *Britannia*?" was Glenarvan's first question.

"Yes, my Lord; Captain Grant's quartermaster."

"And saved with him after the shipwreck?"

"No, my Lord, no. I was separated from him at that terrible moment, for I was swept off the deck as the ship struck."

"Then you are not one of the two sailors mentioned in the document?"

"No; I was not aware of the existence of the document. The captain must have thrown it into the sea when I was no longer on board."

"But the captain? What about the captain?"

"I believed he had perished; gone down with all his crew. I imagined myself the sole survivor."

"But you said just now, Captain Grant was living."

"No," I said, "*if the captain is living.*"

"And you added, *he is on the Australian continent.*"

"And, indeed, he cannot be anywhere else."

"Then you don't know where he is?"

"No, my Lord. I say again, I supposed he was buried beneath the waves, or dashed to pieces against the rocks. It was from you I learnt that he was still alive."

"What then do you know?"

"Simply this—if Captain Grant is alive, he is in Australia."

"Where did the shipwreck occur?" asked Major McNabbs.

This should have been the first question, but in the excitement caused by the unexpected incident, Glenarvan cared more to know where the captain was, than where the *Britannia* had been lost. After the Major's inquiry, however, Glenarvan's examination proceeded more logically, and before long all the details of the event stood out clearly before the minds of the company.

To the question put by the Major, Ayrton replied—

"When I was swept off the forecastle when I was hauling in the jib-boom, the *Britannia* was running right on the Australian coast. She was not more than two cables' length from it, and consequently she must have struck just there."

"In latitude 37° ?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, in latitude 37° ."

"On the west coast?"

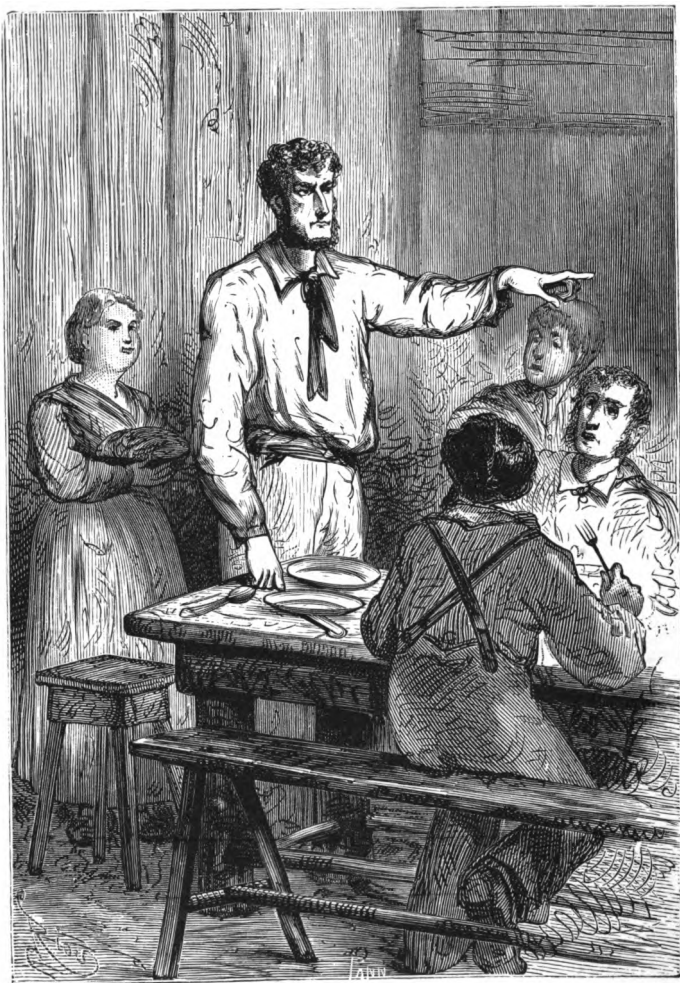
"No, on the east coast," was the prompt reply.

"And at what date?"

"It was on the night of the 27th of June, 1862."

"Exactly, just exactly," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"You see, then, my Lord," continued Ayrton, "I



“If Captain Grant is alive, he's on the Australian continent.”—P. 77.

might justly say, *If Captain Grant* is alive, he is on the Australian continent, and it is useless looking for him anywhere else."

"And we will look for him there, and find him too, and save him," exclaimed Paganel. "Ah, precious document," he added, with perfect *naïveté*, "you must own you have fallen into the hands of uncommonly shrewd people."

But, doubtless, nobody heard his flattering words, for Glenarvan and Lady Helena, and Mary Grant, and Robert were too much engrossed with Ayrton to listen to any one else. They pressed round him and grasped his hands. It seemed as if this man's presence was the sure pledge of Harry Grant's deliverance. If this sailor had escaped the perils of shipwreck, why should not the captain? Ayrton was quite sanguine as to his existence; but on what part of the continent he was to be found, that he could not say. The replies the man gave to the thousand questions that assailed him on all sides were remarkably intelligent and exact. All the while he spake, Mary held one of his hands in hers. This sailor was a companion of her father's, one of the crew of the *Britannia*. He had lived with Harry Grant, crossed the seas with him and shared his dangers. Mary could not keep her eyes off his face, rough and homely though it was, and she wept for joy.

Up to this moment no one had ever thought of doubting either the veracity or identity of the quartermaster; but the Major, and perhaps John Mangles, began now to ask themselves if this Ayrton's word was

to be absolutely believed. There was something suspicious about this unexpected meeting. Certainly the man had mentioned facts and dates which corresponded, and the minuteness of his details was most striking. Still exactness of detail was no positive proof. Indeed, it has been noticed that a falsehood has sometimes gained ground by being exceedingly particular in minutiae. McNabbs, therefore, prudently refrained from committing himself by expressing any opinion.

John Mangles, however, was soon convinced when he heard Ayrton speak to the young girl about her father. He knew Mary and Robert quite well. He had seen them in Glasgow when the ship sailed. He remembered them at the farewell breakfast given on board the *Britannia* to the captain's friends, at which Sheriff McIntyre was present. Robert, then a boy of ten years old, had been given into his charge, and he had run away and tried to climb the rigging.

"Yes, that I did, it is quite true," said Robert.

He went on to mention several other trifling incidents, without attaching the importance to them that John Mangles did, and when he stopped Mary Grant said, in her soft voice—

"Oh, go on, Mr. Ayrton, tell us more about our father."

The quartermaster did his best to satisfy the poor girl, and Glenarvan did not interrupt him, though a score of questions far more important crowded into his mind. Lady Helena made him look at Mary's beaming face, and the words he was about to utter remained unspoken.

Ayrton gave an account of the *Britannia's* voyage across the Pacific. Mary knew most of it before, as news of the ship had come regularly up to the month of May, 1862. In the course of the year, Harry Grant had touched at all the principal ports. He had been to the Hebrides, to New Guinea, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, and had succeeded in finding an important point on the western coast of Papua, where the establishment of a Scotch colony seemed to him easy, and its prosperity certain. A good port on the Molucca and Philippine route must attract ships, especially when the opening of the Suez Canal would have supplanted the Cape route. Harry Grant was one of those who appreciated the great work of M. de Lesseps, and would not allow political rivalries to interfere with international interests.

After reconnoitring Papua, the *Britannia* went to provision herself at Callao, and left that port on the 30th of May, 1862, to return to Europe by the Indian Ocean and the Cape. Three weeks afterwards, his vessel was disabled by a fearful storm in which they were caught, and obliged to cut away the masts. A leak sprang in the hold, and could not be stopped. The crew were too exhausted to work the pumps, and for eight days the *Britannia* was tossed about in the hurricane like a shuttlecock. She had six feet of water in her hold, and was gradually sinking. The boats had been all carried away by the tempest; death stared them in the face, when, on the night of the 22nd of June, as Paganell had rightly supposed, they came in sight of the eastern

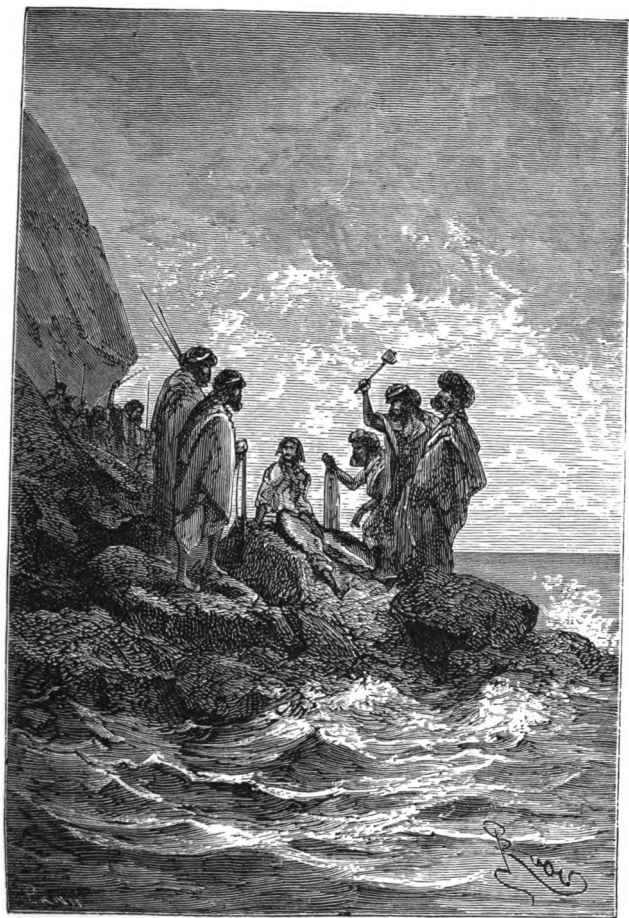
coast of Australia. The ship soon neared the shore, and presently dashed violently against it. Ayrton was swept off by a wave, and thrown among the breakers, where he lost consciousness. When he recovered, he found himself in the hands of natives, who dragged him away into the interior of the country. Since that time he had never heard the *Britannia's* name mentioned, and reasonably enough came to the conclusion that she had gone down with all hands off the dangerous reefs of Twofold Bay.

This ended Ayrton's recital, and more than once sorrowful exclamations were evoked by the story. The Major could not, in common justice, doubt its authenticity. The sailor was then asked to narrate his own personal history, which was short and simple enough. He had been carried by a tribe of natives four hundred miles north of the 37th parallel. He spent a miserable existence there—not that he was ill-treated, but the natives themselves lived miserably. He passed two long years of painful slavery among them, but always cherished in his heart the hope of one day regaining his freedom, and watching for the slightest opportunity that might turn up, though he knew that his flight would be attended with innumerable dangers.

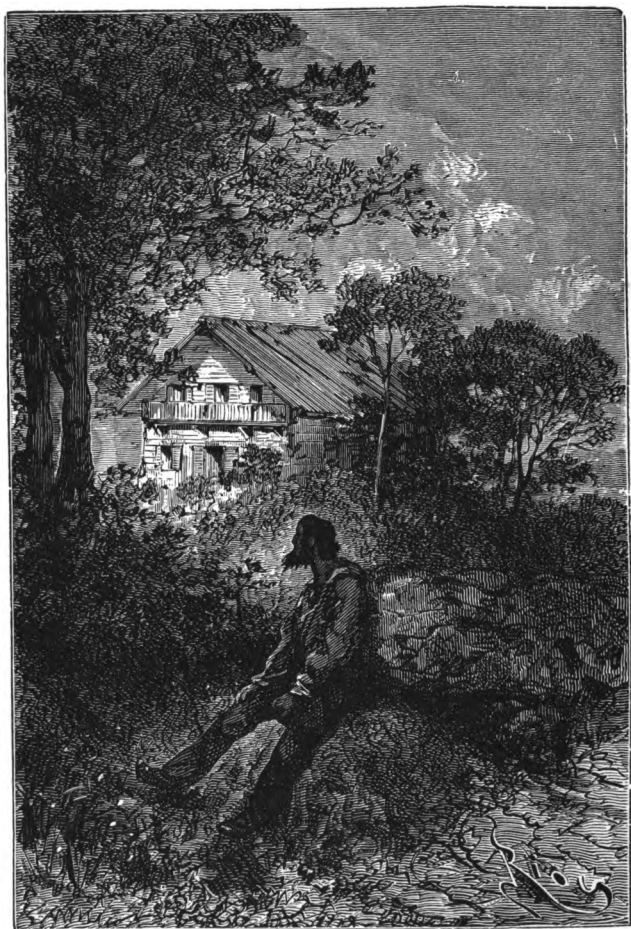
At length one night in October, 1864, he managed to escape the vigilance of the natives, and took refuge in the depths of immense forests. For a whole month he subsisted on roots, edible ferns, and mimosa gums, wandering through vast solitudes, guiding himself by the sun during the day and by the stars at night. He



"Ayrton was swept off by a wave."—P. 80.



"When he recovered, he found himself in the hands of the natives."—P. 80.



"At last he reached the hospitable dwelling of Paddy O'Moore."—P. 81.

went on, though often almost despairingly, through bogs and rivers and across mountains, till he had traversed the whole of the uninhabited part of the continent, where only a few bold travellers have ventured; and at last, in an exhausted and all but dying condition, he reached the hospitable dwelling of Paddy O'Moore, where he said he had found a happy home in exchange for his labour.

"And if Ayrton speaks well of me," said the Irish settler, when the narrative ended, "I have nothing but good to say of him. He is an honest, intelligent fellow, and a good worker; and as long as he pleases, Paddy O'Moore's house shall be his."

Ayrton thanked him by a gesture, and waited silently for any fresh question that might be put to him, though he thought to himself that he surely must have satisfied all legitimate curiosity. What could remain to be said that he had not said a hundred times already. Glenarvan was just about to open a discussion about their future plan of action, profiting by this rencontre with Ayrton, and by the information he had given them, when Major McNabbs, addressing the sailor, said—

"You were quartermaster, you say, on the *Britannia*?"

"Yes," replied Ayrton, without the least hesitation.

But as if conscious that a certain feeling of mistrust, however slight, had prompted the inquiry, he added—

"I have my shipping papers with me; I saved them from the wreck."

He left the room immediately to fetch this official

document, and, though hardly absent a minute, Paddy O'Moore managed to say—

“My Lord, you may trust Ayrton ; I vouch for his being an honest man. He has been two months now in my service, and I have never had once to find fault with him. I knew all this story of the shipwreck and his captivity. He is a true man, worthy of your entire confidence.”

Glenarvan was on the point of replying that he had never doubted his good faith, when the man came in and brought his engagement written out in due form. It was a paper signed by the shipowners and Captain Grant. Mary recognized her father's writing at once. It was to certify that “Tom Ayrton, able-bodied seaman, was engaged as quartermaster on board the three-mast vessel, the *Britannia*, Glasgow.”

There could not possibly be the least doubt now of Ayrton's identity, for it would have been difficult to account for his possession of the document if he were not the man named in it.

“Now then,” said Glenarvan, “I wish to ask every one's opinion as to what is best to be done. Your advice, Ayrton, will be particularly valuable, and I shall be much obliged if you would let us have it.”

After a few minutes' thought, Ayrton replied—

“I thank you, my Lord, for the confidence you show towards me, and I hope to prove worthy of it. I have some knowledge of the country, and the habits of the natives, and if I can be of service to you——”

“Most certainly you can,” interrupted Glenarvan.

"I think with you," resumed Ayrton, "that the captain and his two sailors have escaped alive from the wreck, but since they have not found their way to the English settlements, nor been seen anywhere, I have no doubt that their fate has been similar to my own, and that they are prisoners in the hands of some of the native tribes."

"That's exactly what I have always argued," said Paganel. "The shipwrecked men were taken prisoners, as they feared. But must we conclude that, like yourself, they have been dragged away north of the 37th parallel?"

"I should suppose so, sir; for hostile tribes would hardly remain anywhere near the districts under British rule."

"That will complicate our search," said Glenarvan, somewhat disconcerted. "How can we possibly find traces of the captives in the heart of so vast a continent?"

No one replied, though Lady Helena's questioning glances at her companions seemed to press for an answer. Paganel even was silent. His ingenuity for once was at fault. John Mangles paced the cabin with great strides, as if he fancied himself on the deck of his ship, evidently quite nonplussed.

"And you, Mr. Ayrton," said Lady Helena at last, "what would you do?"

"Madam," replied Ayrton readily enough, "I should re-embark in the *Duncan*, and go right to the scene of the catastrophe. There I should be guided by circum-

stances, and by any chance indications we might discover."

"Very good," returned Glenarvan; "but we must wait till the *Duncan* is repaired."

"Ah, she has been injured then?" said Ayrton.

"Yes," replied Mangles.

"To any serious extent?"

"No, but such injuries as require more skilful workmanship than we have on board. One of the branches of the screw is twisted, and we cannot get it repaired nearer than Melbourne."

"Well, let the ship go to Melbourne then, and we will go without her to Twofold Bay."

"And how?" asked Mangles.

"By crossing Australia as we crossed America, keeping along the 37th parallel."

"But the *Duncan*?" repeated Ayrton, as if particularly anxious on that score.

"The *Duncan* can rejoin us, or we can rejoin her, as the case may be. Should we discover Captain Grant in the course of our journey, we can all return together to Melbourne. If we have to go on to the coast, on the contrary, then the *Duncan* can come to us there. Who has any objection to make? Have you, Major?"

"No, not if there is a practicable route across Australia."

"So practicable, that I propose Lady Helena and Miss Grant should accompany us."

"Are you speaking seriously?" asked Glenarvan.

"Perfectly so, my Lord. It is a journey of 350

miles, not more. If we go twelve miles, a day, it will barely take us a month, just long enough to put the vessel in trim. If we had to cross the continent in a lower latitude, at its widest part, and traverse immense deserts, where there is no water, and where the heat is tropical, and go where the most adventurous travellers have never yet ventured, that would be a different matter. But the 37th parallel cuts through the province of Victoria, quite an English country, with roads and railways, and well populated almost everywhere. It is a journey you might almost make in a chaise, though a wagon would be better. It is a mere trip from London to Edinburgh, nothing more."

"What about wild beasts, though?" asked Glenarvan, anxious to go into all the difficulties of the proposal.

"There are no wild beasts in Australia."

"And how about the savages?"

"There are no savages in this latitude, and if there were, they are not cruel like the New Zealanders."

"And the convicts?"

"There are no convicts in the southern provinces, only in the eastern colonies. The province of Victoria not only refused to admit them, but passed a law to prevent any ticket-of-leave men from other provinces entering her territories. This very year the Government threatened to withdraw its subsidy from the Peninsular Company if their vessels continued to take in coal in those western parts of Australia where convicts are admitted. What! Don't you know that, and you an Englishman?"

"In the first place, I beg leave to say I am not an Englishman," replied Glenarvan.

"What M. Paganel says is perfectly correct," said Paddy O'Moore. "Not only the province of Victoria, but also Southern Australia, Queensland, and even Tasmania, have agreed to expel convicts from their territories. Ever since I have been on this farm, I have never heard of one."

"And I can speak for myself. I have never come across one."

"You see then, friends," went on Jacques Paganel, "there are few if any savages, no ferocious animals, no convicts, and there are not many countries of Europe for which you can say as much. Well, will you go?"

"What do you think, Helena?" asked Glenarvan.

"What we all think, dear Edward," replied Lady Helena, turning towards her companions; "let us be off at once."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPARTURE.

GLENARVAN never lost much time between adopting an idea and carrying it out. As soon as he consented to Paganel's proposition, he gave immediate orders to make arrangements for the journey with as little delay as possible. The time of starting was fixed for the 22nd of December, the next day but one.

What results might not come out of this journey! The presence of Harry Grant had become an indisputable fact, and the chances of finding him had increased. Not that anyone expected to discover the captain exactly on the 37th parallel, which they intended strictly to follow, but they might come upon his track, and at all events, they were going to the actual spot where the wreck had occurred. That was the principal point.

Besides, if Ayrton consented to join them and act as their guide through the forests of the province of Victoria and right to the eastern coast, they would have a fresh chance of success. Glenarvan was sensible of this, and asked his host whether he would have

any great objection to his asking Ayrton to accompany them, for he felt particularly desirous of securing the assistance of Harry Grant's old companion.

Paddy O'Moore consented, though he would regret the loss of his excellent servant.

"Well, then, Ayrton, will you come with us in our search expedition?" said his Lordship.

Ayrton did not reply immediately. He even showed signs of hesitation; but at last, after due reflection, said—

"Yes, my Lord, I will go with you, and if I cannot take you to Captain Grant, I can at least take you to the very place where his ship struck."

"Thanks, Ayrton."

"One question, my Lord."

"Well?"

"Where will you meet the *Duncan* again?"

"At Melbourne, unless we traverse the whole continent from coast to coast."

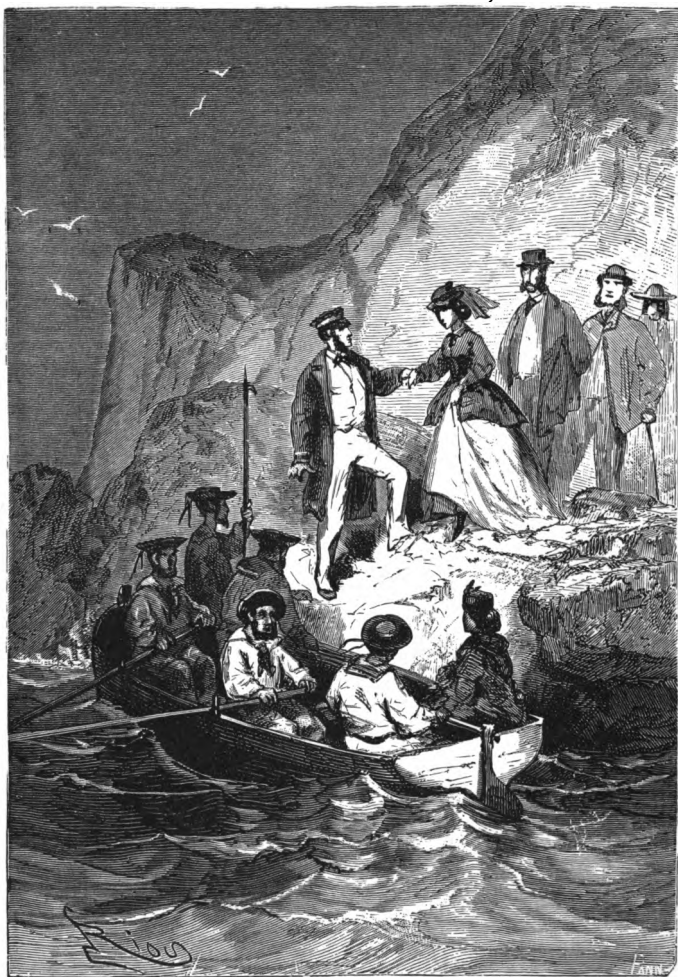
"But the captain?"

"The captain will wait my instructions in the port of Melbourne."

"You may depend on me, then, my Lord."

"I will, Ayrton."

The quartermaster was warmly thanked by the passengers of the *Duncan*, and the children loaded him with caresses. Everyone rejoiced in his decision except the Irishman, who lost in him an intelligent and faithful helper. But Paddy understood the importance Glenarvan attached to the presence of the man, and sub-



"The whole party then returned to the ship."—P. 89.

mirted. The whole party then returned to the ship, after arranging a rendezvous with Ayrton, and ordering him to procure the necessary means of conveyance across the country.

When John Mangles supported the proposition of Paganel, he took for granted that he should accompany the expedition. He began to speak to Glenarvan at once about it, and adduced all sorts of arguments to advance his cause—his devotion to Lady Helena and his Lordship, how useful he could be in organizing the party, and how useless on board the *Duncan*; everything, in fact, but the main reason, and that he had no need to bring forward.

"I'll only ask you one question, John," said Glenarvan. "Have you entire confidence in your chief officer?"

"Absolute," replied Mangles. "Tom Austin is a good sailor. He will take the ship to her destination, see that the repairs are skilfully executed, and bring her back on the appointed day. Tom is a slave to duty and discipline. Never would he take it on himself to alter or retard the execution of an order. Your Lordship may rely on him as on myself."

"Very well then, John," replied Glenarvan. "You shall go with us, for it would be advisable," he added, smiling, "that you should be there when we find Mary Grant's father."

"Oh! your Lordship," murmured John, turning pale.

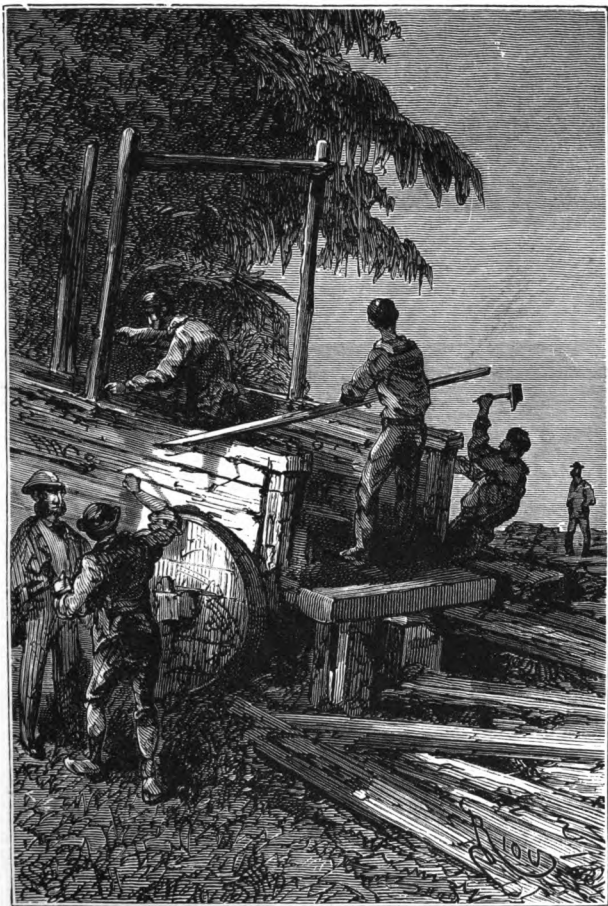
He could say no more, but grasped Lord Glenarvan's hand.

Next day, John Mangles and the ship's carpenter, accompanied by sailors carrying provisions, went back to Paddy O'Moore's house to consult the Irishman about the best method of transport.

All the family met him, ready to give their best help. Ayrton was there, and gave the benefit of his experience.

On one point both he and Paddy agreed, that the journey should be made in a bullock-wagon by the ladies, and that the gentlemen should ride on horseback. Paddy could furnish both bullocks and vehicle. The vehicle was a cart twenty feet long, covered over by a tilt, and resting on four large wheels without spokes, or felloes, or iron tires—in a word, plain wooden disks. The front and hinder part were connected by means of a rude mechanical contrivance, which did not allow of the vehicle turning quickly. There was a pole in front thirty-five feet long, to which the bullocks were to be yoked in couples. These animals were able to draw both with head and neck, as their yoke was fastened on the nape of the neck, and to this a collar was attached by an iron peg. It required great skill to drive such a long, narrow, shaky concern, and to guide such a team by a goad; but Ayrton had served his apprenticeship to it on the Irishman's farm, and Paddy could answer for his competency. The rôle of conductor was therefore assigned to him.

There were no springs to the wagon, and, consequently, it was not likely to be very comfortable; but, such as it was, they had to take it. But if the rough



"The vehicle was a cart twenty feet long."—P. 10.

construction could not be altered, John Mangles resolved that the interior should be made as easy as possible. His first care was to divide it into two compartments by a wooden partition. The back one was intended for the provisions and luggage, and M. Olbinett's portable kitchen. The front was set apart especially for the ladies, and, under the carpenter's hands, was to be speedily converted into a comfortable room, covered with a thick carpet, and fitted up with a toilet-table and two couches. Thick leather curtains shut in this compartment, and protected the occupants from the chilliness of the nights. In case of necessity, the gentlemen might shelter themselves here, when the violent rains came on, but a tent was to be their usual resting-place when the caravan camped for the night. John Mangles exercised all his ingenuity in furnishing the small space with everything that the two ladies could possibly require, and he succeeded so well, that neither Lady Helena nor Mary had much reason to regret leaving their cosy cabins on board the *Duncan*.

For the rest of the party, the preparations were soon made, for they needed much less. Strong horses were provided for Lord Glenarvan, Paganel, Robert Grant, McNabbs, and John Mangles; also for the two sailors, Wilson and Mulrady, who were to accompany their captain. Ayrton's place was, of course, to be in front of the wagon, and M. Olbinett, who did not much care for equitation, was to make room for himself among the baggage.

Horses and bullocks were grazing in the Irishman's meadows, ready to fetch at a moment's notice.

After all arrangements were made, and the carpenter set to work, John Mangles escorted the Irishman and his family back to the vessel, for Paddy wished to return the visit of Lord Glenarvan. Ayrton thought proper to go too, and about four o'clock the party came over the side of the *Duncan*.

They were received with open arms. Glenarvan would not be outstripped in politeness, and invited his visitors to stop and dine. His hospitality was willingly accepted. Paddy was quite amazed at the splendour of the saloon, and was loud in admiration of the fitting up of the cabins, and the carpets and hangings, as well as of the polished maple-wood of the upper-deck. Ayrton's approbation was much less hearty, for he considered it mere costly superfluity.

But when he examined the yacht with a sailor's eye, the quartermaster of the *Britannia* was as enthusiastic about it as Paddy. He went down into the hold, inspected the screw department and the engine-room, examining the engine thoroughly, and inquired about its power and consumption. He explored the coal-bunkers, the store-room, the powder-store, and armoury, in which last he seemed to be particularly attracted by a cannon mounted on the forecastle. Glenarvan saw he had to do with a man who understood such matters, as was evident from his questions. Ayrton concluded his investigations by a survey of the masts and rigging.

"You have a fine vessel, my Lord," he said, after his curiosity was satisfied.

"A good one, and that is best," replied Glenarvan.

"And what is her tonnage?"

"Two hundred and ten tons."

"I don't think I am far out," continued Ayrton, "in judging her speed at fifteen knots. I should say she could do that easily."

"Say seventeen," put in John Mangles, "and you've hit the mark."

"Seventeen!" exclaimed the quartermaster. "Why, not a man-of-war—not the best among them, I mean—could chase her!"

"Not one," replied Mangles. "The *Duncan* is a regular racing yacht, and would never let herself be beaten."

"Even at sailing?" asked Ayrton.

"Even at sailing."

"Well, my Lord, and you too, captain," returned Ayrton, "allow a sailor who knows what a ship is worth, to compliment you on yours."

"Stay on board of her, then, Ayrton," said Glenarvan; "it rests with yourself to call it yours."

"I will think of it, my Lord," was all Ayrton's reply.

Just then M. Olbinett came to announce dinner, and his Lordship repaired with his guest to the saloon.

"That Ayrton is an intelligent man," said Paganel to the Major.

"Too intelligent!" muttered McNabbs, who, without any apparent reason, had taken a great dislike to the face and manners of the quartermaster.

During the dinner, Ayrton gave some interesting details about the Australian continent, which he knew perfectly. He asked how many sailors were going to accompany the expedition, and seemed astonished to hear that only two were going. He advised Glenarvan to take all his best men, and even urged him to do it, which advice, by the way, ought to have removed the Major's suspicion.

"But," said Glenarvan, "our journey is not dangerous, is it?"

"Not at all," replied Ayrton, quickly.

"Well, then, we'll have all the men we can on board. Hands will be wanted to work the ship, and to help in the repairs. Besides, it is of the utmost importance that she should meet us to the very day, at whatever place may be ultimately selected. Consequently, we must not lessen her crew."

Ayrton said nothing more, as if convinced his Lordship was right.

When evening came, Scotch and Irish separated. Ayrton and Paddy O'Moore and family returned home. Horses and wagon were to be ready next day, and eight o'clock in the morning was fixed for starting.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant soon made their preparations. They had less to do than Jacques Paganel, for he spent half the night in arranging, and wiping, and rubbing up the lenses of his telescope. Of course,

next morning he slept on till the Major's stentorian voice roused him.

The luggage was already conveyed to the farm, thanks to John Mangles, and a boat was waiting to take the passengers. They were soon seated, and the young captain gave his final orders to Tom Austin, his chief officer. He impressed upon him that he was to wait at Melbourne for Lord Glenarvan's commands, and to obey them scrupulously, whatever they might be.

The old sailor told John he might rely on him, and, in the name of the men, begged to offer his Lordship their best wishes for the success of this new expedition.

A storm of hurrahs burst forth from the yacht as the boat rowed off. In ten minutes the shore was reached, and a quarter of an hour afterwards the Irishman's farm.

All was ready. Lady Helena was enchanted on her installation. The huge chariot, with its primitive wheels and massive planks, pleased her particularly. The six bullocks yoked in pairs had a patriarchal air about them which quite took her fancy. Ayrton, goad in hand, stood waiting the orders of his new master.

"My word!" said Paganel, "this is a famous vehicle; it beats all the mail-coaches in the world. I don't know a better fashion of travelling than in a mountebank's caravan—a moveable house, which goes or stops wherever you please. What can one wish better? The Sarmatians understood that, and never travelled in any other way."

"Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena, "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in my *salons*."

"Assuredly, Madame, I should count it an honour. Have you fixed a day?"

"I shall be at home every day to my friends," replied Lady Helena; "and you are——"

"The most devoted among them all," interrupted Paganel, gaily.

These mutual compliments were interrupted by the arrival of the seven horses, saddled and ready. They were brought by Paddy's sons, and Lord Glenarvan paid the sum stipulated for his various purchases, adding his cordial thanks, which the worthy Irishman valued at least as much as his golden guineas.

The signal was given to start, and Lady Helena and Mary took their places in the reserved compartment. Ayrton seated himself in front, and Olbinett scrambled in among the luggage. The rest of the party, well-armed with carbines and revolvers, mounted their horses. Ayrton gave a peculiar cry, and his team set off. The wagon shook, and the planks creaked, and the axles grated in the naves of the wheels; and before long the hospitable farm of the Irishman was out of sight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROVINCE OF VICTORIA.

It was the 23rd of December, 1864, a dull, damp, dreary month in the northern hemisphere; but on the Australian continent it might be called June. The hottest season of the year had already commenced, and the sun's rays were almost tropical, when Lord Glenarvan started on his new expedition.

Australasia is the name given to the whole of the English possessions in this part of the Indian Ocean. This includes New Holland, Tasmania, New Zealand, and some adjacent islands. The Australian continent is divided into vast colonies, very disproportionate in size and riches. Any one that glances at Petermann's or Preschoell's maps must be struck with the regular divisions. The English have drawn a cord of conventional lines which separate these great provinces, without consideration of mountain slopes or river courses, or the variations in climate and differences in races. The colonies are placed rectangularly, like pieces of inlaid work, evidencing the hand of the geometrician rather than the geographer; but the

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coasts, with their varied windings, and fiords, and bays, and capes, and estuaries, protest against it, in the name of Nature, by their charming irregularity.

The chess-board style always and very justly excited Jacques Paganel's ire. If Australia had been French, most certainly the French geographers would not have carried to such lengths the passion for the square and rule.

The present number of colonies in this great ocean isle is six: New South Wales, the capital of which is Sydney; Queensland, capital, Brisbane; Victoria, capital, Melbourne; South Australia, capital, Adelaide; Western Australia, capital, Perth; and Northern Australia, which has no capital yet. It is only along the coast that is inhabited. Even considerable towns have scarcely ventured to explore two hundred miles up the country, and as to the interior, comprising a space equal to two-thirds of Europe, it is almost unknown.

Most fortunately the 37th parallel did not cross these immense deserts, inaccessible regions, which have cost many martyrs to science already. Glenarvan could never have encountered them. He had only to do with the southern part of Australia—viz., with a narrow portion of the province of Adelaide, with the whole of Victoria, and with the top of the reversed triangle which forms New South Wales.

It is scarcely sixty-two miles from Cape Bernouilli to the frontiers of Victoria. It was not above a two days' march, and Ayrton reckoned on their sleeping next night at Apsley, the most westerly town of Victoria.

The commencement of a journey is always marked by ardour, both in the horses and the horsemen. This is well enough in the horsemen; but if the horses are to go far, their speed must be moderated and their strength husbanded. It was, therefore, fixed that the average journey every day should not be more than from twenty-five to thirty miles.

Besides, the pace of the horses must be regulated by the slower pace of the bullocks, truly mechanical engines which lose in time what they gain in power. The wagon, with its passengers and provisions, was the very centre of the caravan, the moving fortress. The horsemen might act as scouts, but must never be far away from it.

As no special marching order had been agreed upon, everybody was at liberty to follow his inclinations within certain limits. The hunters could scour the plain, amiable folks could talk to the fair occupants of the wagon, and philosophers could philosophize. Paganel, who was all three combined, had to be and was everywhere at once.

The march across Adelaide presented nothing of any particular interest. A succession of low hills rich in dust, a long stretch of what they call in Australia "bush," several prairies covered with a small prickly bush, considered a great dainty by the ovine tribe, embraced many miles. Here and there they noticed a species of sheep peculiar to New Holland—sheep with pigs' heads, feeding between the posts of the telegraph line recently made between Adelaide and the coast.

Up to this time there had been a singular resemblance in the country to the monotonous plains of the Argentine Pampas. There was the same grassy flat soil, the same sharply-defined horizon against the sky. McNabbs declared they had never changed countries; but Paganel told him to wait, and he would soon see a difference. And on the faith of this assurance marvellous things were expected by the whole party.

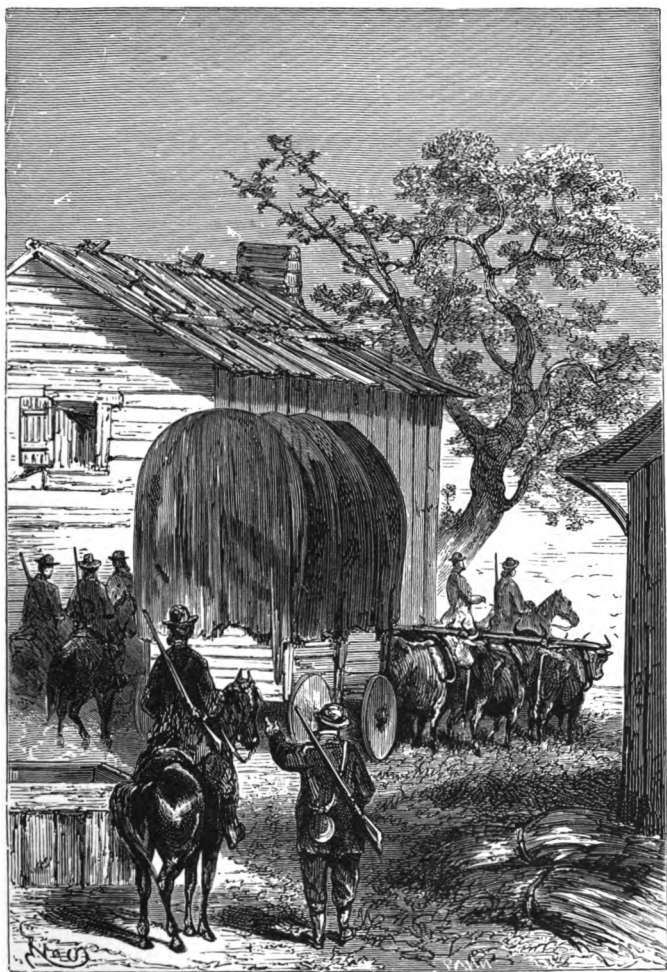
About three o'clock they came to a large open space destitute of trees, known by the name of "Mosquito Plains." The learned Frenchman had the satisfaction of proving for himself that the name had been worthily bestowed. Both horses and riders suffered severely from the incessant bites of these tormenting *diptera*. To escape them was impossible, but there was found a method of easing the pain by means of ammonia, which was carried in the portable medicine-chest.

Towards evening, hedges of acacias brightened up the plains, with here and there clumps of white gum-trees. A little further on they came to a trench newly dug, and then to trees of European origin—olives, lemon-trees, and green oaks, and finally to well-kept fences. About eight o'clock, the bullocks urged on by Ayrton's goad, arrived at Red Gum Station.

The word "station" is applied to large cattle-breeding establishments, the owners of which are called "squatters," people who sit on the ground. Certainly this is the most natural position a colonist would take



"Both horses and riders suffered severely from the incessant bites."—P. 100.



"About eight o'clock the bullocks arrived at Red Gum Station."—P. 100.

when fatigued with long peregrinations through a vast unknown country.

Red Gum Station was not a very considerable establishment, but Glenarvan found there the most frank hospitality. The table is invariably spread for the traveller in these lonely habitations, and in every Australian colonist one is sure of an obliging host.

Ayrton had his bullocks yoked by daybreak next morning, for he wished to reach the frontiers of Victoria the same evening. The ground gradually began to be more uneven, and a chain of little hills rose in the distance all powdered with red dust. One might have fancied an immense scarlet flag had been thrown on the ground, the folds of which were swelled out with the wind. A few "mallings," a species of fir spotted with white, with a sort of straight smooth trunk, stretched out their branches thick with dark-green foliage over the fertile plains, where troops of jerboas were frisking and gambolling. Further on were vast fields of brambles and young gum-trees, the groups became fewer, the small separate bushes became trees, and presented the first specimen of an Australian forest.

However, as they approached the frontiers of Victoria, the country became sensibly modified. The travellers felt they were in a new country as they went on mile after mile, never deviating from the fixed route unless some lake or mountain obliged them to take a circuitous course, keeping up a jog trot pace to suit that of the heavy-footed bullocks who had at least this

one merit, though they never went fast they never stopped.

In this fashion after a march of sixty miles in two days, the caravan reached the parish of Apsley, the first town in the Province of Victoria in the Wimerrra district.

The wagon was put up at the Crown Inn. Supper was soon smoking on the table. It consisted solely of mutton served up in various ways.

They all ate heartily, but talked more than they ate, eagerly asking Paganel questions about the wonders of the country they were just beginning to traverse. The amiable geographer needed no pressing, and told them first that this part of it was called Australia Felix.

"Wrongly named!" he continued. "It had better have been called rich, for it is true of countries, as individuals, that riches do not make happiness. Thanks to her gold mines, Australia has been abandoned to wild devastating adventurers. You will come across them when we reach the gold fields."

"Is not the colony of Victoria of but recent origin?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, Madame, it only numbers thirty years of existence. It was on the 6th of June, 1835, on a Tuesday——"

"At a quarter past seven in the evening," put in the Major, who delighted in teasing the Frenchman about his precise dates.

"No, at ten minutes past seven," replied the geographer, gravely, "that Batman and Falckner first

began a settlement at Port Phillip, the bay on which the large city of Melbourne now stands. For fifteen years the colony was part of New South Wales, and recognized Sydney as the capital ; but in 1851, she was declared independent, and took the name of Victoria."

"And has greatly increased in prosperity since then, I believe," said Glenarvan.

"Judge for yourself, my noble friend," replied Paganel. "Here are the numbers given by the last statistics ; and let McNabbs say as he likes, I know nothing more eloquent than statistics."

"Go on," said the Major.

"Well, then, in 1836, the colony of Port Phillip had 244 inhabitants. To-day the province of Victoria numbers 550,000. Seven millions of vines produce annually 121,000 gallons of wine. There are 103,000 horses spreading over the plains, and 675,272 horned cattle graze in her wide-stretching pastures."

"Is there not also a certain number of pigs?" inquired McNabbs.

"Yes, Major, 79,625."

"And how many sheep?"

"7,115,943, McNabbs."

"Including the one we are eating at this moment?"

"No, without counting that, since it is three parts devoured."

"Bravo, Monsieur Paganel," exclaimed Lady Helena, laughing heartily. "It must be owned you are posted up in geographical questions, and my cousin McNabbs need not try and find you tripping."

"It is my calling, Madame, to know this sort of thing, and to give you the benefit of my information when you please. You may therefore believe me when I tell you that wonderful things are in store for you in this strange country."

"It does not look like it at present," said McNabbs, on purpose to tease Paganel.

"Just wait, impatient Major," was his rejoinder. "You have hardly put your foot on the frontier, when you turn round and abuse it. Well, I say and say again, and will always maintain, that this is the most curious country on the earth. Its formation, and nature, and products, and climate, and even its future disappearance have amazed, and are now amazing, and will amaze, all the *savants* in the world. Think, my friends, of a continent, the margin of which, instead of the centre, rose out of the waves originally like a gigantic ring, which encloses, perhaps, in its centre, a sea partly evaporated, the waves of which are drying up daily; where humidity does not exist either in the air or in the soil; where the trees lose their bark every year, instead of their leaves; where the leaves present their side to the sun and not their face, and consequently give no shade; where the wood is often incombustible, where good-sized stones are dissolved by the rain; where the forests are low and the grasses gigantic; where the animals are strange; where quadrupeds have beaks, like the echidna, or ornithorhynchus, and naturalists have been obliged to create a special order for them, called monothremes; where the kangaroos leap on unequal

legs, and sheep have pigs' heads ; where foxes fly about from tree to tree ; where the swans are black ; where rats make nests ; where the bower-bird opens her reception-rooms to receive visits from her feathered friends ; where the birds astonish the imagination by the variety of their notes and their aptness ; where one bird serves for a clock, and another makes a sound like a postilion cracking a whip, and a third imitates a knife-grinder, and a fourth the motion of a pendulum ; where one laughs when the sun rises, and another cries when the sun sets ! Oh, strange illogical country, land of paradoxes and anomalies, if ever there was one on earth—the learned botanist Grimard was right when he said, 'There is that Australia, a sort of parody, or rather a defiance of universal laws in the face of the rest of the world.' ”

Paganel's tirade was poured forth in the most impetuous manner, and seemed as if it were never coming to an end. The eloquent secretary of the Geographical Society was no longer master of himself. He went on and on, gesticulating furiously, and brandishing his fork to the imminent danger of his neighbours. But at last his voice was drowned in a thunder of applause, and he managed to stop.

Certainly after such an enumeration of Australian peculiarities, he might have been left in peace, but the Major said in the coolest tone possible,

“ And is that all, Paganel ? ”

“ No, indeed not,” rejoined the Frenchman, with renewed vehemence.

"What!" exclaimed Lady Helena; "there are more wonders still in Australia?"

"Yes, Madame, its climate. It is even stranger than its productions."

"Is it possible?" they all said.

"I am not speaking of the hygienic qualities of the climate," continued Paganel, "rich as it is in oxygen and poor in azote. There are no damp winds, because the trade winds blow regularly on the coasts, and most diseases are unknown, from typhus to measles, and chronic affections."

"Still, that is no small advantage," said Glenarvan.

"No doubt; but I am not referring to that, but to one quality it has which is incomparable."

"And what is that?"

"You will never believe me."

"Yes, we will," exclaimed his auditors, their curiosity aroused by all this preamble.

"Well, it is——"

"It is what?"

"It is a moral regeneration."

"A moral regeneration?"

"Yes," replied the *savant*, in a tone of conviction. "Here metals do not get rust on them by exposure to the air, nor men. Here the pure, dry atmosphere whitens everything rapidly, both linen and souls. The virtue of the climate must have been well known in England when they determined to send their criminals here to be reformed."

“What ! do you mean to say the climate has really any such influence ?” said Lady Helena.

“Yes, Madame, both on animals and men.”

“You are not joking, Monsieur Paganel ?”

“I am not, Madame. The horses and the cattle here are of incomparable docility. You see it.”

“It is impossible !”

“But it is a fact. And the convicts transported into this reviving, salubrious air, become regenerated in a few years. Philanthropists know this. In Australia, all natures grow better.”

“But what is to become of you then, Monsieur Paganel, in this privileged country—you who are so good already ?” said Lady Helena. “What will you turn out ?”

“Excellent, Madame; just excellent, and that’s all.”

CHAPTER X.

THE WIMERRA RIVER.

THE next day, the 24th of December, they started at daybreak. The heat was already considerable, but not unbearable, and the road was smooth and good, and allowed the cavalcade to make speedy progress. In the evening they camped on the banks of the White Lake, the waters of which are brackish and undrinkable.

Jacques Paganel was obliged to own that the name of this lake was a complete misnomer, for the waters were no more white than the Black Sea is black, or the Red Sea red, or the Yellow River yellow, or the Blue Mountains blue. However, he argued and disputed the point with all the *amour propre* of a geographer, but his reasoning made no impression.

M. Olbinett prepared the evening meal with his accustomed punctuality, and after this was dispatched, the travellers disposed themselves for the night in the wagon and in the tent, and were soon sleeping soundly, notwithstanding the melancholy howling of the "dingoes," the jackals of Australia.

A magnificent plain, thickly covered with chry-

santhemums, stretched out beyond the lake, and Glenarvan and his friends would gladly have explored its beauties when they awoke next morning, but they had to start. As far as the eye could reach, nothing was visible but one stretch of prairie, enamelled with flowers, in all the freshness and abundance of spring. The blue flowers of the slender-leaved flax, combined with the bright hues of the scarlet acanthus, a flower peculiar to the country. Numerous varieties of trees enliven the soil, and every species of salsolaceous plant. This salsola family is of great importance to industry, as they yield excellent soda when burnt. Paganel, who became a botanist when he found himself among flowers, gave the right name of all those various productions, and, with his usual love of figures, took care to state that there were upwards of 4200 species of plants, divided into 120 families in the Australian flora.

Later in the day, after a quick march of about twelve miles, the road wound its way through groves of tall acacias, and mimosas, and white gum-trees, with their ever-varying foliage. The vegetable kingdom in this country of spring plains is not ungrateful to the orb of day, and gives back in sweet odours and gay colours the rays bestowed so freely by the sun.

The animal kingdom is more chary of its productions. A few cassowaries were bounding over the plain, but it was impossible to get near them. The Major was fortunate enough, however, to hit one very rare animal with a ball in the leg. This was the jabiru, a species which is fast disappearing, the gigantic crane

of the English colonies. This winged creature was five feet high, and his wide, conical, extremely pointed beak, measured eighteen inches in length. The violet and purple tints of his head contrasted vividly with the glossy green of his neck, and the dazzling whiteness of his throat, and the bright red of his long legs. Nature seems to have exhausted in its favour all the primitive colours on her palette.

Great admiration was bestowed on this bird, and the Major's spoil would have borne the honours of the day, had not Robert come across an animal a few miles further on, and bravely killed it. It was a shapeless creature, half porcupine, half anteater, a sort of unfinished animal belonging to the first stage of creation. A long glutinous extensible tongue hung out of his jaws in search of the ants, which formed its principal food.

"It is an echidna," said Paganel. "Have you ever seen such a creature?"

"It is horrible," replied Glenarvan.

"Horrible enough, but curious, and, what's more, peculiar to Australia. One might search for it in vain in any other part of the world."

Naturally enough, the geographer wished to preserve this interesting specimen of monotramata, and wanted to stow it away in the luggage; but M. Olbinett resented the idea so indignantly, that the *savant* was obliged to abandon his project.

This day the travellers passed the 141° of longitude by 30". Up to this time, neither colonists nor squatters



"This winged creature was five feet high."—P. 110.

had come in sight ; the country seemed deserted. As to aborigines, there was not even the shadow of one, for the natives keep further north, wandering among the trackless wilds watered by the affluents of the Darling and the Murray.

But they came across one singular spectacle, for they chanced to see one of those immense droves of cattle which bold speculators bring down from the mountains in the east to the provinces of Victoria and Southern Australia.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, John Maingles descried an enormous column of smoke about three miles off, gradually overspreading the whole horizon. What could be the cause of this phenomenon? Paganel was inclined to think it was some description of meteor, and his lively imagination was already in search of an explanation, when Ayrton cut short all his conjectures summarily, by announcing that the cloud of dust was caused by a drove of cattle on the road.

The quartermaster proved right, for as the cloud came nearer, quite a chorus of bleatings, and neighings, and bellowings escaped from it, mingled with the loud tones of a human voice, in the shape of cries, and whistles, and vociferations.

Presently a man came out of the cloud. This was the leader-in-chief of the four-footed army. Glenarvan advanced towards him, and friendly relations were speedily established between them. The leader, or to give him his proper designation, the stock-keeper, was part owner of the drove. His name was Sam Machell,

and he was on his way from the eastern provinces to Portland Bay.

The drove numbered 12,075 head in all, or 1000 bullocks, 11,000 sheep, and 75 horses. All these had been bought in the Blue Mountains in a poor, lean condition, and were going to be fattened up on the rich pasture lands of Southern Australia, and sold again at a great profit. Sam Machell expected to get £2 on each bullock, and 10s. on every sheep, which would bring him in £3750. This was doing good business; but what patience and energy were required to conduct such a restive, stubborn lot to their destination, and what fatigues must have to be endured. Truly the gain was hardly earned.

Sam Machell told his history in few words, while the drove continued their march among the groves of mimosas. Lady Helena and Mary and the rest of the party seated themselves under the shade of a wide-spreading gum-tree, and listened to his recital.

It was seven months since Sam Machell had started. He had gone at the rate of ten miles a day, and his interminable journey would last three months longer. His assistants in the laborious task comprised twenty dogs and thirty men, five of whom were blacks, and very serviceable in tracking up any strayed beasts. Six wagons made the rear-guard. All the men were armed with stockwhips, the handles of which are eighteen inches long, and the lash nine feet, and they move about among the ranks, bringing refractory animals

back into order, while the dogs, the light cavalry of the regiment, preserved discipline in the wings.

The travellers were struck with the admirable arrangement of the drove. The different stock were kept apart, for wild sheep and bullocks would not have got on together at all. The bullocks would never have grazed where the sheep had passed along, and consequently they had to go first, divided into two battalions. Five regiments of sheep followed in charge of twenty men, and last of all came the horses.

Sam Machell drew the attention of his auditors to the fact, that the real guides of the drove were neither the men nor the dogs, but the oxen themselves, beasts of superior intelligence, recognized as leaders by their congenitors. They advanced in front with perfect gravity, choosing the best route by instinct, and fully alive to their claim to respect. Indeed, they were obliged to be studied and humoured in everything, for the whole drove obeyed them implicitly. If they took it into their heads to stop, it was a matter of necessity to yield to their good pleasure, for not a single animal would move a step till these leaders gave the signal to set off.

Sundry details added by the stock-keeper completed the history of this expedition, worthy of being written, if not commended, by Xenophon himself. As long as the troop marched over the plains, it was well enough, there was little difficulty or fatigue. The animals fed as they went along, and slaked their thirst at the numerous creeks that watered the plains, sleeping at night

and making good progress in the day, always obedient and tractable to the dogs: But when they had to go through great forests and groves of eucalyptus and mimosas, the difficulties increased. Platoons, battalions, and regiments got all mixed together or scattered, and it was a work of time to collect them again. Should a "leader" unfortunately go astray, he had to be found, cost what it might, on pain of a general disbandment, and the blacks were often long days in quest of him, before their search was successful. During the heavy rains the lazy beasts refused to stir, and when violent storms chanced to occur, the creatures became almost mad with terror, and were seized with a wild, disorderly panic.

However, by dint of energy and activity, the stock-keeper triumphed over these difficulties, incessantly renewed though they were. He kept steadily on; mile after mile of plains, and woods, and mountains, lay behind. But in addition to all his other qualities, there was one higher than all that he specially needed when they came to rivers. This was patience—patience that could stand any trial, that not only could hold out for hours and days, but for weeks. The stock-keeper would be himself forced to wait on the banks of a stream that might have been crossed at once. There was nothing to hinder but the obstinacy of the herd. The bullocks would taste the water and turn back. The sheep fled in all directions, afraid to brave the liquid element. The stock-keeper hoped when night came he might manage them better, but they still

refused to go forward. The rams were dragged in by force, but the sheep would not follow. They tried what thirst would do, by keeping them without drink for several days, but when they were brought to the river again, they simply quenched their thirst, and declined a more intimate acquaintance with the water. The next expedient employed was to carry all the lambs over, hoping the mothers would be drawn after them, moved by their cries. But the lambs might bleat as pitifully as they liked, the mothers never stirred. Sometimes this state of affairs would last a whole month, and the stock-keeper would be driven to his wits' end by his bleating, bellowing, neighing army. Then all of a sudden, one fine day, without rhyme or reason, a detachment would take it into their heads to make a start across, and the only difficulty now was to keep the whole herd from rushing helter-skelter after them. Confusion set in among the ranks, and numbers of the animals were drowned in the passage.

Such was the narrative of Sam Machell. During its recital, a considerable part of the troop had filed past in good order. It was time for him to return to his place at their head, that he might be able to choose the best pasturage. Taking leave of Lord Glenarvan, he sprang on a capital horse of the native breed, that one of his men held waiting for him, and after shaking hands cordially with everybody all round, took his departure. A few minutes later, nothing was visible of the stock-keeper and his troop but a cloud of dust.

The wagon resumed its course in the opposite

direction, and did not stop again till they halted for the night at the foot of Mount Talbot.

Paganel made the judicious observation that it was the 25th of December, the Christmas Day so dear to English hearts. But the steward had not forgotten it, and an appetising meal was soon ready under the tent, for which he deserved and received warm compliments from the guests. Indeed, M. Olbinett had quite excelled himself on this occasion. He produced from his stores such an array of European dishes as is seldom seen in the Australian desert. Reindeer hams, slices of salt beef, smoked salmon, oat cakes, and barley meal scones; tea *ad libitum*, and whiskey in abundance, and several bottles of port, composed this astonishing meal. The little party might have thought themselves in the grand dining-hall of Malcolm Castle, in the heart of the Highlands of Scotland.

Nothing was wanting, even down to the spiced bowl and mince-pies at dessert. Paganel thought he could make an addition in the shape of a sort of wild orange he found growing at the foot of the hills. It is called "moccaby" by the natives. The fruit is rather insipid, but the crushed pips heat the mouth like Cayenne pepper. The geographer obstinately ate them as a duty he owed to science, till his palate was all on fire, and he could not reply to the Major's questions about the peculiarities of Australian deserts.

The next day, the 26th, nothing of any importance occurred. They came to the springs of Norton Creek, and a little later, to the Mackenzie River, half dried up.

The weather kept fine, and the heat quite bearable. The wind was south, and as refreshing as a north wind in the northern hemisphere—a fact which Paganel made Robert Grant remark.

“A fortunate circumstance for us,” he added, “for the heat is greater on the average in the southern hemisphere than in the northern.”

“And why?” asked the boy.

“Why, Robert? Have you never heard that the earth is nearer the sun in winter?”

“Yes, Monsieur Paganel.”

“And that the cold of the winter is owing to the obliquity of the solar rays?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, my boy, it is for the very same reason that it is warmer in the southern hemisphere.”

“I don’t understand,” said Robert, opening his eyes wide.

“Think, Robert,” replied Paganel, “when it is winter with us in Europe, what is the season here in Australia at the Antipodes?”

“Summer,” returned Robert.

“Well, and since it is precisely at this time that the earth is nearest the sun—do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand that.”

“The summer in the southern regions is hotter, consequently, than summer in the northern.”

“I see it must be, Monsieur Paganel.”

“When we say, then, that the sun is nearer the

earth in winter, it is only true for us who live in the northern hemisphere."

"I never thought of that," replied Robert.

"And now, don't go and forget it, my boy," returned Paganel.

Robert took this little lesson in cosmography with a good grace, and learnt, in conclusion, that the mean temperature of the province of Victoria was 74° Fahrenheit.

In the evening the little cavalcade halted about five miles beyond Lake Lonsdale, between Mount Drummond on the north, and Mount Dryden on the south.

The next day, at 11 a.m., the wagon reached the banks of the Wimmera on the 143rd meridian.

The river, half a mile in width, wound its limpid course between tall rows of gum-trees and acacias. Magnificent specimens of the *myrtacea*, among others, the *metrosideros speciosa*, fifteen feet high, with long drooping branches, adorned with red flowers. Thousands of birds, the lories, and greenfinches, and gold-winged pigeons, not to speak of the noisy paroquets, flew about in the green branches. Below, on the bosom of the water, were a couple of shy and unapproachable black swans. This *rara avis* of the Australian rivers soon disappeared among the windings of the Wimmera, which watered the charming landscape in the most capricious manner.

The wagon stopped on a grassy bank, the long fringes of which dipped in the rapid current. There was neither raft nor bridge, but cross over they must.

Ayrton looked about for a practicable ford. About a quarter of a mile up the water seemed shallower, and it was here they determined to try to pass over. The soundings in different parts showed a depth of three feet only, so that the wagon might safely enough venture.

"I suppose there is no other way of fording the river?" said Glenarvan to the quartermaster.

"No, my Lord; but the passage does not seem dangerous. We shall manage it."

"Shall Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant get out of the wagon?"

"Not at all. My bullocks are surefooted, and you may rely on me for keeping them straight."

"Very well, Ayrton; I can trust you."

The horsemen surrounded the ponderous vehicle, and all stepped boldly into the current. Generally, when wagons have to ford rivers, they have empty casks slung all round them, to keep them floating on the water; but they had no such swimming belt with them on this occasion, and they could only depend on the sagacity of the animals and the prudence of Ayrton, who directed the team. The Major and the two sailors were some feet in advance. Glenarvan and John Mangles went at the sides of the wagon, ready to lend any assistance the fair travellers might require, and Paganel and Robert brought up the rear.

All went well till they reached the middle of the Wimmera, but then the hollow deepened, and the water rose to the middle of the wheels. The bullocks were

in danger of losing their footing, and dragging with them the oscillating vehicle. Ayrton devoted himself to his task courageously. He jumped into the water, and hanging on by the bullocks' horns, dragged them back into the right course.

Suddenly the wagon made a jolt that it was impossible to prevent; a crack was heard, and the vehicle began to lean over in a most precarious manner. The water now rose to the ladies' feet; the whole concern began to float, though John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan hung on to the side. It was an anxious moment.

Fortunately a vigorous effort drove the wagon towards the opposite shore, and the bank began to slope upward, so that horses and bullocks were able to regain their footing, and soon the whole party found themselves on the other side, glad enough, though wet enough too.

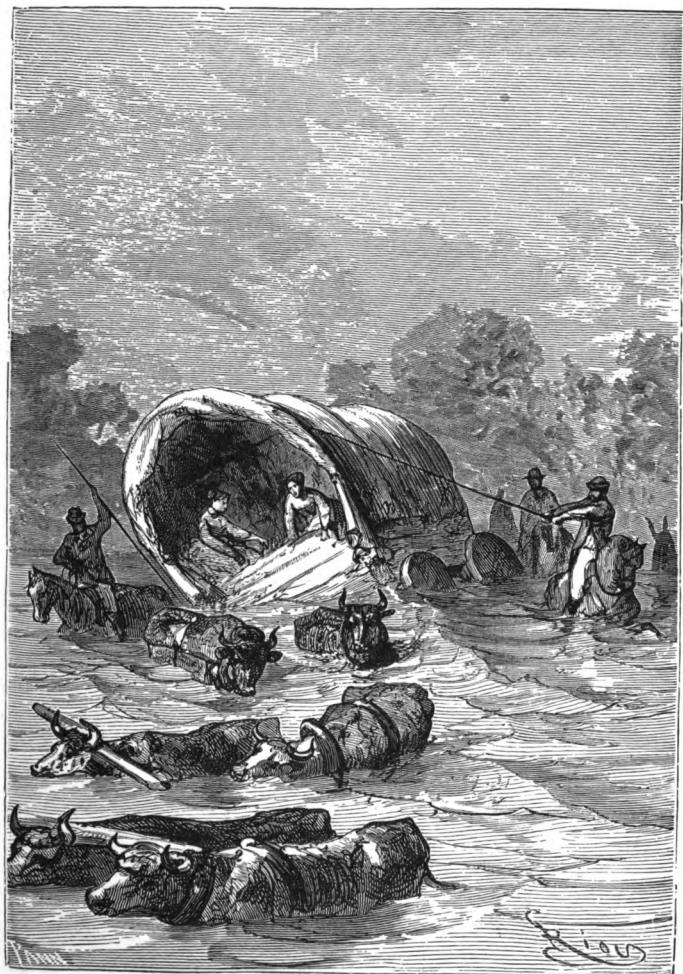
The fore part of the wagon, however, was broken by the jolt, and Glenarvan's horse had lost a shoe.

This was an accident that needed to be promptly repaired. They looked at each other, hardly knowing what to do, till Ayrton proposed he should go to Black Point Station, twenty miles further north, and bring back a blacksmith with him.

"Yes, go, my good fellow," said Glenarvan. "How long will it take you to get there and back?"

"About fifteen hours," replied Ayrton, "but not longer."

"Start at once, then, and we will camp here, on the banks of the Wimmera, till you return."



"The whole concern began to float."—P. 120.

CHAPTER XI.

BURKE AND STUART.

THE rest of the day passed in talking and walking. The travellers, chatting and admiring the scene, followed the banks of the Wimmera. As they approached, the grey crane and the ibis took flight, uttering hoarse cries as they flew. The satin-bird hid himself on the upper branches of the wild figs; the loriot, the epimachus, and many others, flitted about among the branches of the tree-lilies; the kingfishers desisted from their eternal fishing, but the more civilized family of paroquets, the blue mountain-parrot, clothed in the seven colours of the rainbow, the little rosella, with its scarlet head and yellow throat, and the red and blue lory persisted in their deafening chatter on the tops of the gum-trees, now covered with bloom.

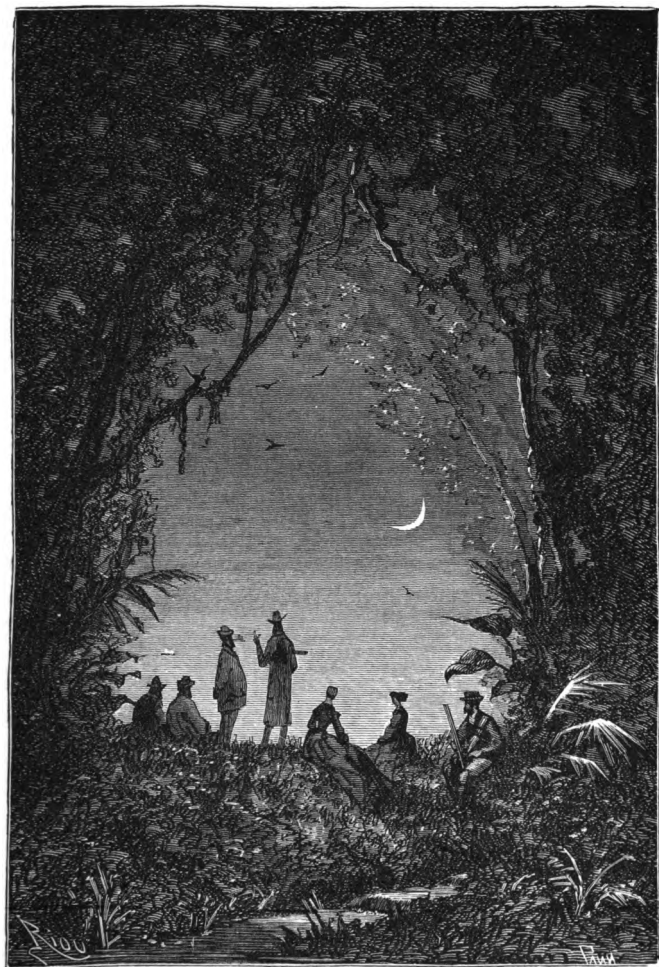
And so the day passed in admiration of the lovely scenery. Sometimes the wayfarers rested on the grass beside the murmuring waters, and sometimes they wandered, fancy-led, among the clusters of mimosas, till at length the night, preceded by a momentary twilight, surprised them about half-a-mile from the encampment. They returned, guiding themselves not by the

pole-star, which is invisible in the southern hemisphere, but by the Southern Cross, which glittered in the sky half-way between the horizon and the zenith. M. Olbinett had laid supper in the tent, and they sat down to table. The masterpiece of the banquet was a salmi of parrots, which Wilson had cleverly shot, and the steward had skilfully dressed.

Supper over, the slightest excuse was sufficient to justify them in not giving to sleep the first hours of so lovely a night. Lady Helena pleased everybody when she requested Paganel to relate the adventures of the great Australian explorers, a history which he had long promised.

Paganel wished nothing better. His audience ranged themselves at the foot of a magnificent *Banksia*, the smoke of cigars soon rose to where the foliage was lost in the darkness, and the geographer, drawing on his inexhaustible memory, commenced his narrative.

“You, my friends, will remember, and the Major will not have forgotten, the enumeration of the explorers which I made to you on board the *Duncan*. Of the many who have sought to penetrate to the heart of the continent, four only succeeded in crossing it from south to north or from north to south. These four were: Burke, in 1860 and 1861; McKinlay, in 1861 and 1862; Landsborough, in 1862; and Stuart, also in 1862. Of McKinlay and of Landsborough I shall say very little. The former started from Adelaide, reached the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the latter from the Gulf of Carpentaria reached Melbourne, both sent out by



"The audience ranged themselves at the foot of a magnificent Banksia."—P. 122.

Australian committees to search for Burke, who had not returned, and was never to return.

“Burke and Stuart are the two brave explorers of whom I am going to speak, and I will begin without further preamble.

“On the 20th of August, 1860, under the auspices of the Royal Society of Melbourne, an Irishman, Robert O’Hara Burke, started on this expedition. He had been a military officer, and later was inspector of police at Castlemaine. Eleven men went with him: William John Wills, a distinguished young astronomer; Dr. Beckler, a botanist; Gray, King, a young soldier of the Indian army; Landells, Brahe, and several sepoys. Twenty-five horses and twenty-five camels carried the travellers, their baggage, and also sufficient provisions for eighteen months.

“The expedition was to make for the northern shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria, following first the course of Cooper’s Creek. It succeeded without difficulty in crossing the Darling and the Murray, and arrived at Menindie Station, on the boundary of the colonies.

“There they became conscious that the quantity of baggage was a source of great embarrassment. This difficulty, and a certain asperity of disposition in Burke, caused misunderstandings among the party. Landells, the superintendent of the camels, followed by some of the Hindoo attendants, separated himself from the expedition, and returned to the banks of the Darling. Burke continued his march northward. Passing some-

times through magnificent pastoral country, abundantly watered, and sometimes over stony tracts without any water, he came down towards Cooper's Creek. The 20th of November, three months after his departure, he established a first depot of provisions on the banks of the creek.

"Here the travellers were detained some time, unable to find a practicable route to the north, on which they could be sure of a supply of water. After great difficulties they arrived at a camping-place, which they called Fort Wills. Here, just half-way between Melbourne and the Gulf of Carpentaria, they established a station surrounded with palisades. Burke divided his party into two sections. One, under command of Brahe, was to stay at Fort Wills for three months, or longer if the provisions held out, and await the return of the other party, which consisted only of Burke, King, Gray, and Wills. They took with them six camels, and three months' supplies—that is, three hundredweight of flour, fifty pounds of rice, fifty pounds of oatmeal, one hundredweight of dried meat, one hundredweight of salt pork and bacon, and thirty pounds of biscuit—to make a journey of eighteen hundred miles, going and coming.

"These four men started. After a trying journey across a stony desert they arrived at the Eyre River, at the extreme point reached by Sturt in 1845, and following as near as possible the 140th meridian, they kept towards the north.

"On the 7th of January they passed the tropic

under a fiery sun, often beguiled by the delusive mirage, often without water, but sometimes refreshed by heavy storms, meeting here and there harmless natives; in fact, finding few obstacles in a journey free from any barrier of lake, or river, or mountain.

"The 12th of January some sandstone hills appeared in the distance, among others, Mount Forbes, and then a succession of granite chains which they speak of as 'the ranges.' There the toil was great. They made very little way. The animals would go no further. 'Still on the ranges! The camels sweat from fear!' writes Burke, in his journal. Still, by dint of exertion, they arrived on the banks of the Turner River, then on the upper course of the Flinders River, seen by Stokes in 1841, on its way to the Gulf of Carpentaria, curtained in between groves of palm and eucalyptus.

"The neighbourhood of the sea was indicated by a succession of marshy tracts. Here one of the camels came to grief. The rest refused to go further. King and Gray had to stay with them. Burke and Wills continued their journey to the north, and after great difficulties, only slightly described in their notes, they arrived at a place where the tide covered the marshes, but they did not actually see the ocean. This was on the 11th of February, 1861."

"I conclude," said Lady Glenarvan, "that these brave men could not penetrate any further."

"No, Madame," said Paganel. "The swampy ground sank under their feet, and they were obliged to turn their thoughts to rejoining their companions at

Fort Wills. A sad return, I assure you. Weak and exhausted, they dragged themselves as far as the spot where they had left their comrades, Gray and King, and then descending towards the south by the route they had already followed, they turned their steps towards Cooper's Creek.

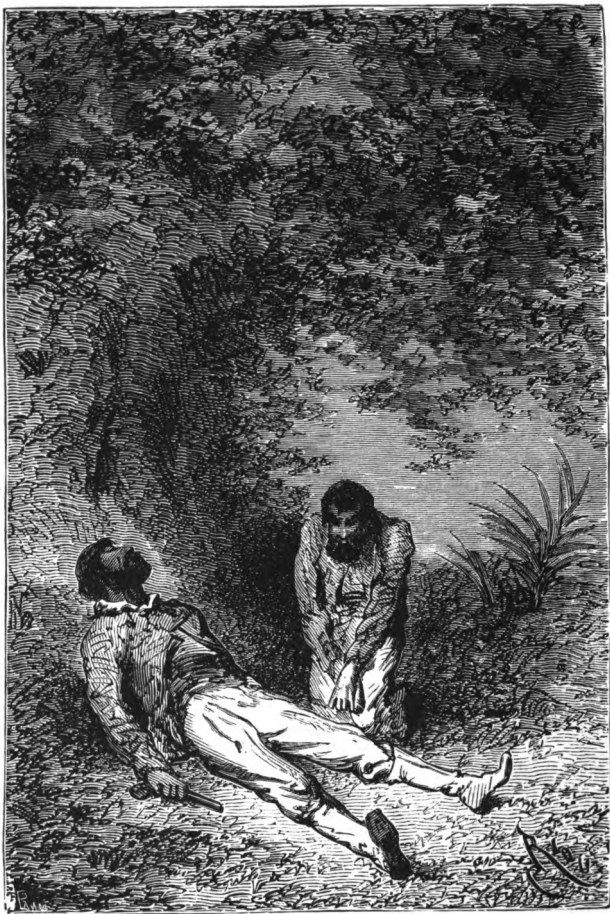
"Their wanderings, their dangers, their sufferings on this journey, we have no means of knowing, for the notes are missing in the journals of the explorers, but it must have been a terrible time.

"At last, in April, they arrived in the valley of Cooper's Creek, reduced in number to three. Gray had fallen a victim to fatigue. Four camels had perished. Still, if Burke could only succeed in gaining Fort Wills, where Brahe and his depot of provisions were waiting for him, he and his companions were saved. They redoubled their efforts; they dragged themselves on for a few more days; the 21st of April, they descried the palisades of the fort—they reached it! That very day, after five long months of weary hopeless waiting, Brahe had gone!"

"Gone!" cried little Robert.

"Yes, gone! By a deplorable fatality, he had gone that very day! The note left by Brahe was dated only seven hours ago! Burke could not hope to overtake him. The poor fellows fortified themselves a little with the provisions of the depot, but they had no means of transport, and four hundred and fifty miles still separated them from the Darling.

"At this juncture, Burke, contrary to the judgment



"After this Burke spoke no more."—P. 127.

of Wills, determined to try and reach the Australian settlements near Mount Hopeless, one hundred and eighty miles from Fort Wills. They started. Of the two camels which remained to them, one perished in a marshy tributary of Cooper's Creek; the other could not go a step farther; they had to kill it, and feed on its flesh. Soon all their provisions were consumed. The three unfortunate wanderers were reduced to living on *nardoo*, an aquatic plant whose sporules were eatable. Without water and without means of transport, they dared not leave the banks of Cooper's Creek. Their hut was destroyed by fire, together with their few necessities! Now they were lost indeed! Nothing remained for them but to die!

"Burke called King to him. 'I have only a few hours to live,' said he; 'take my watch and my notes. When I am dead, I wish you to place a pistol in my right hand, and to leave me just as I am, without burial!' After this, Burke spoke no more, and expired at eleven o'clock the next day.

"King, horrified and distracted, went to look for a tribe of native blacks. When he returned he found that Wills too had sunk. As to King, the natives took him in charge, and in the month of September he was discovered by the expedition sent out under Mr. Howitt to look for Mr. Burke, at the same time as the parties under McKinlay and Landsborough. Thus, of the four explorers, only one survived the journey across the continent of Australia."

Paganel's story left a melancholy impression on the

mind of his audience. They all thought of Captain Grant wandering, perhaps like Burke and his comrades, in the midst of that fatal continent. Had these wrecked ones escaped the sufferings which decimated those hardy bushmen ! The analogy was so natural that tears came to the eyes of Mary Grant.

“My father ! my poor father !” murmured she.

“Miss Mary, Miss Mary !” cried John Mangles, “to meet such hardships as those you must be in the interior districts. Captain Grant must be among the natives like King, and, like King, he will be saved. He has never been in such a sorry plight.”

“Never, my dear young lady,” added Paganel ; “and I assure you the Australian natives are very hospitable.”

“God grant you may be right,” said the young girl.

“And Stuart, what of him ?” said Glenarvan, wishing to change the subject.

“Stuart ?” replied Paganel. “Oh, Stuart had better luck, and his name is a great one in Australian annals. From the year 1848, John MacDouall Stuart, your countryman, my friends, foreshadowed his own labours by accompanying Sturt into the desert regions north of Adelaide. In 1860, with only two followers, he made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate into the interior of Australia. He was not a man to be daunted by failure. In 1861, the first of January, he left Chambers’ Creek at the head of a party composed of eleven determined men, and he only stopped short one

hundred and eighty miles from the Gulf of Carpentaria ; but, his provisions being exhausted, he was obliged to return to Adelaide without having crossed the vast continent. But, in spite of this failure, he resolved to tempt his fortune again, and organized a third expedition, which was destined to attain the ardently-desired object.

“The Parliament of South Australia took up this expedition with great enthusiasm, and passed a vote of two thousand pounds. Stuart took all the precautions which his bush experience suggested to him. His friends, Waterhouse the naturalist, Thring, Keckwick, his old comrades, Woodford and Auld—ten in all, joined him. He took twenty leather bottles, capable of containing seven gallons each ; and on the 5th of April, 1862, the party was assembled at the basin of Newcastle Water, beyond the 18th parallel of latitude, the point which Stuart had never been able to pass. His plan of march followed nearly the 131st meridian, and thus marked a route seven degrees west of that followed by Burke.

“The basin of Newcastle Water was to be taken as the base of future operations. Stuart, encompassed by dense forests, vainly strove to pass to the north or north-east. The same ill-fortune frustrated his attempt to reach the Victoria River on the west ; impenetrable bush impeded all passage.

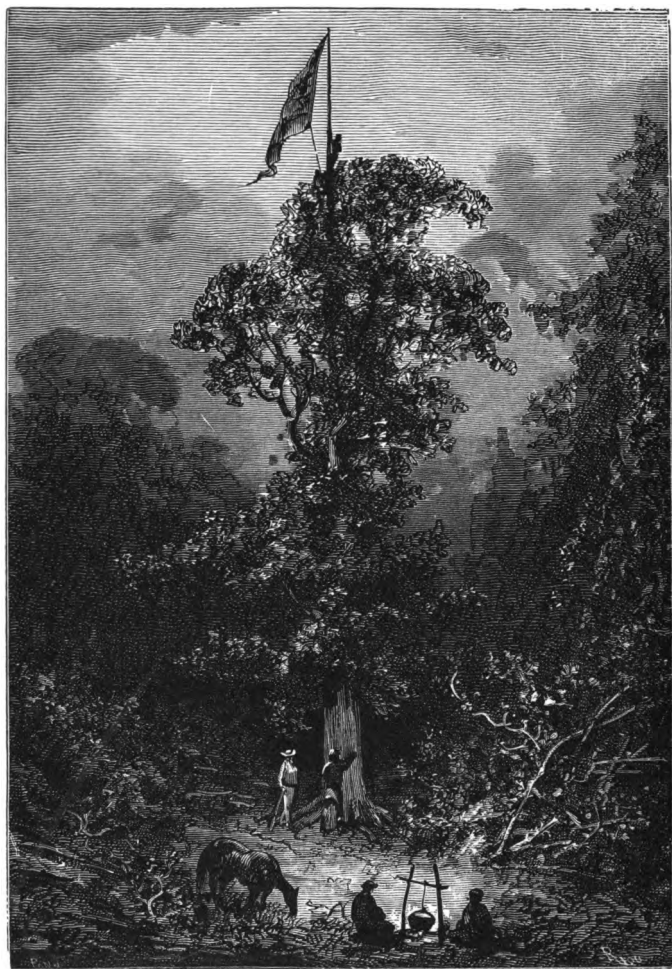
“Stuart resolved to change his camp, and he succeeded in moving it further to the north into the Hower Swamp. Then, bearing east, he fell in with Daly’s Creek, which he ascended for thirty miles.

"The country became magnificent; its pastures would have been a joy and a fortune to a squatter; the gum-trees grew to a prodigious height. Stuart, who was delighted, pushed ahead still; he reached the Strangway River and Roper's Creek, discovered by Leichardt. These waters flowed amid palms worthy of this tropical region, and here the explorer found aboriginal tribes who gave them a kindly reception.

"From this point the expedition headed north-north-east, crossing a tract of sandstone and ferruginous rock to look for the source of the Adelaide River, which falls into the gulf of Van Diemen. Then they crossed Arnhem's Land, in the midst of cabbage-palms, bamboos, pines, and screw-pines. The Adelaide widened its banks, and became marshy; the sea was at hand.

"On Tuesday, the 22nd of July, Stuart camped on the marshes of Fresh-Water, sadly put about by the innumerable streamlets which intersected his line of march. He sent three of his party to look for a practicable road; next day, after heading creeks they could not cross, and sometimes smothered in the muddy creeks, he reached some elevated plains covered with turf, where grew clumps of gum-trees and stringy bark-trees, inhabited by flocks of wild geese, ibis, and water birds perfectly wild. Of natives, there were few or none, only smoke-wreaths from distant camps.

"At twenty minutes past eight o'clock on the morning of the 24th of July, nine months after leaving Adelaide, Stuart started for the north. He hoped to reach the sea that same day. The country became



"On the summit he fixed the Australian flag."—P. 131.

slightly elevated; here and there appeared ironstone and volcanic rock; the timber became smaller, began to look like coast trees; then came a great alluvial valley, with a thick border of arbutus. Stuart distinctly heard the noise of the waves as they broke, but he said nothing to his companions. They toiled through a thicket almost impassable by branches of wild vine.

"Stuart went on a few steps. He finds himself on the shores of the Indian Ocean. 'The sea! the sea!' cried Thring, in an ecstasy. The others ran forward, and three long cheers saluted the Indian Ocean.

"The continent has been crossed for the fourth time.

"Stuart, in fulfilment of the promise he had made to Sir R. MacDonnell, dipped his feet and washed his face and hands in the waves. Then, returning to the valley, he cut on the bark of a tree his initials, J. M. D. S. And then they camped beside a running stream.

"Next day, Thring went to reconnoitre the country, with a view to reach by a S.W. route the mouth of the Adelaide River, but the soil was too boggy for their horses' feet, and they were compelled to abandon the idea.

"There, in a patch of open country, Stuart selected a lofty tree. He cut off the lower branches, and on the summit he fixed the Australian flag. On the bark of the tree were cut these words, 'DIG ONE FOOT—S.'

"And if at some future day a traveller digs at the spot indicated, he will find a tin box, and in this box the document whose words are graven on my memory :

" 'South Australian Great Northern Exploring Expedition.

" 'The exploring party under the command of John MacDouall Stuart,

arrived at this spot on the 25th day of July, 1862, having crossed the entire continent of Australia from the Southern to the Indian Ocean, passing through the centre. They left the city of Adelaide on the 26th day of October, 1861, and the most northern station of the colony on 21st day of January, 1862. To commemorate this happy event, they have raised this flag bearing his name. All well. God save the Queen !”

“Here follow the signatures of Stuart and his companions.”

Thus is set forth the great event which produced a great sensation all over the world.

“And did all these brave men live to rejoin their friends in the South ?” asked Lady Helena.

“Yes, Madame,” said Paganel, “all ; but not without undergoing terrible trials. Stuart suffered most ; his health was seriously affected by scurvy when he resumed his journey to Adelaide. In the beginning of September his malady had made such progress that he did not hope to reach the settlements. He could not sit in the saddle ; he travelled lying on a stretcher slung between two horses. At the end of October an attack of blood-spitting brought him to the lowest ebb. A horse was killed to make him broth ; the 28th of October he thought death was at hand when a salutary crisis saved him, and on the 10th of December the little party arrived unbroken at the out settlements.

“On the 17th of September Stuart entered Adelaide in the midst of an enthusiastic population. But his health was shattered, and after receiving the gold medal of the Geographical Society, he took passage in the *Indus* for his beloved Scotland, his native land, where we shall see him on our return.”*

* James Paganel may perhaps have seen Stuart on his return to Scotland, but he cannot have long enjoyed the society of the famous traveller, for Stuart died on the 5th of June, 1866, at his modest dwelling of Notting-ham Hill.

"He was a man who possessed in the highest degree the quality of moral courage," said Glenarvan, "and to that quality rather than that of physical strength, great achievements are due. Scotland has a right to be proud of him as one of her children."

"And since Stuart's time," asked Lady Helena, "has no traveller attempted further discoveries?"

"Yes, Madame," replied Paganel. "I have often spoken to you of Leichardt. So far back as 1844 he had made a remarkable journey in Southern Australia. In 1848 he undertook a second, this time to the north-east. That is seventeen years ago, and he was never seen again. Last year the celebrated botanist, Dr. Mueller, of Melbourne, set on foot a public subscription to defray the expenses of an expedition in search of him. The requisite sum was speedily obtained, and a party of courageous squatters, commanded by the bold and intelligent MacIntyre, started from the pasturages of the Paroo river, on the 21st of June, 1864. At this moment he has probably penetrated far into the interior of the continent, in his search for Leichardt. May he succeed—and may we too, like him, find again the friends so dear to us?"

Thus ended the geographer's story. It was late. Paganel received universal thanks, and shortly after all were peaceably sleeping, while the bird-clock, hidden in the branches of the white gum-tree, kept time all through the still night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RAILWAY FROM MELBOURNE TO SANDHURST.

It was not without apprehension that the Major saw Ayrton quit the Wimerra camp to go and look for a blacksmith at the Black-Point Station. But he did not breathe a word of his private misgivings, and contented himself with watching the neighbourhood of the river; nothing disturbed the repose of those tranquil glades, and after a short night the sun re-appeared on the horizon.

As to Glenarvan, his only fear was lest Ayrton should return alone. If they failed to find a workman, the wagon could not resume the journey. This might end in a delay of many days, and Glenarvan, impatient to succeed, could brook no delay, in his eagerness to attain his object.

Ayrton luckily had lost neither his time nor his trouble. He appeared next morning at daybreak, accompanied by a man who gave himself out as the blacksmith from Black-Point Station. He was a powerful fellow, and tall, but his features were of a low, brutal type, which did not prepossess any one in his

favour. But that was nothing, provided he knew his business. He scarcely spoke, and certainly did not waste his breath in useless words.

"Is he a good workman?" said John Mangles to the quartermaster.

"I know no more about him than you do, captain," said Ayrton. "But we shall see."

The blacksmith set to work. Evidently that was his trade, as they could plainly see from the way he set about repairing the fore-part of the wagon. He worked skilfully and with uncommon energy. The Major observed that the flesh of his wrists was deeply furrowed, showing a ring of extravasated blood. It was the mark of a recent injury which the sleeve of an old woollen shirt could not conceal. MacNabbs questioned the blacksmith about these sores which looked so painful. The man continued his work without answering. Two hours more and the damage the carriage had sustained was made good. As to Glenarvan's horse, it was soon disposed of. The blacksmith had had the forethought to bring the shoes with him. These shoes had a peculiarity which did not escape the Major; it was a trefoil clumsily cut on the back part. MacNabbs pointed it out to Ayrton.

"It is the Black-Point brand," said the quartermaster. "That enables them to track any horses that may stray from the station, and prevents their being mixed with other herds."

The horse was soon shod. The blacksmith claimed his wage, and went off without uttering four words.

Half an hour later, the travellers were on the road. Beyond the grove of mimosas was a stretch of sparsely timbered country, which quite deserved its name of "open plain." Some fragments of quartz and ferruginous rock lay among the scrub and the tall grass, where numerous flocks were feeding. Some miles further the wheels of the wagon ploughed deep into the alluvial soil, where irregular creeks murmured in their bed, half hidden among giant reeds. By and bye, they skirted vast salt lakes, rapidly evaporating. The journey was accomplished without trouble, and, indeed, without fatigue.

Lady Helena invited the horsemen of the party to pay her a visit in turns, as her reception-room was but small, and in pleasant converse with this amiable woman they forgot the fatigue of their day's ride.

Lady Helena, seconded by Miss Mary, did the honours of their ambulatory house with perfect grace. John Mangles was not forgotten in these daily invitations, and his somewhat serious conversation was not unpleasing.

The party crossed, in a diagonal direction, the mail-coach road from Crowland to Horsham, which was a very dusty one, and little used by pedestrians.

The spurs of some low hills were skirted at the boundary of Talbot County, and in the evening the travellers reached a point about three miles from Maryborough. A fine rain was falling, which in any other country would have soaked the ground; but here the

air absorbed the moisture so wonderfully, that the camp did not suffer in the least.

Next day, the 29th of December, the march was delayed somewhat by a succession of little hills, resembling a miniature Switzerland. It was a constant repetition of up and down hill, and many a jolt besides, all of which were scarcely pleasant. The travellers walked part of the way, and thought it no hardship.

At eleven o'clock they arrived at Carisbrook, rather an important municipality. Ayrton was for passing outside the town without going through it, in order, he said, to save time. Glenarvan concurred with him, but Paganel, always eager for novelties, was for visiting Carisbrook. They gave him his way, and the wagon went on slowly.

Paganel, as was his custom, took Robert with him. His visit to the town was very short, but it sufficed to give him an exact idea of Australian towns. There was a bank, a court-house, a market, a church, and a hundred or so of brick houses, all exactly alike. The whole town was laid out in squares, crossed with parallel streets in the English fashion. Nothing could be more simple, nothing less attractive. As the town grows, they lengthen the streets as we lengthen the trousers of a growing child, and thus the original symmetry is undisturbed.

Carisbrook was full of activity, a remarkable feature in these towns of yesterday. It seems in Australia as if towns shot up like trees, owing to the heat of the sun. Men of business were hurrying along the streets ; gold

buyers were hastening to meet the in-coming escort; the precious metal, guarded by the local police, was coming from the mines at Bendigo and Mount Alexander. All the little world was so absorbed in its own interests, that the strangers passed unobserved amid the laborious inhabitants.

After an hour devoted to visiting Carisbrook, the two visitors rejoined their companions, and crossed a highly cultivated district. Long stretches of prairie, known as the "Low Level Plains," next met their gaze, dotted with countless sheep, and shepherds' huts. And then came a sandy tract, without any transition, but with the abruptness of change so characteristic of Australian scenery. Mount Simpson and Mount Tarren-gower marked the southern point where the boundary of the Loddon district cuts the 144th meridian.

As yet they had not met with any of the aboriginal tribes living in the savage state. Glenarvan wondered if the Australians were wanting in Australia, as the Indians had been wanting in the Pampas of the Argentine district; but Paganel told him that, in that latitude, the natives frequented chiefly the Murray Plains, about one hundred miles to the eastward.

"We are now approaching the gold district," said he; "in a day or two we shall cross the rich region of Mount Alexander. It was here that the swarm of diggers alighted in 1852; the natives had to fly to the interior. We are in civilized districts without seeing any sign of it; but our road will, before the day is over, cross the railway which connects the Murray with the

sea. Well, I must confess, a railway in Australia does seem to me an astounding thing!"

"And, pray, why, Paganel?" said Glenarvan.

"Why? because it jars on one's ideas. Oh! I know you English are so used to colonizing distant possessions. You, who have electric telegraphs and universal exhibitions even in New Zealand, you think it is all quite natural. But it dumbfounds the mind of a Frenchman like myself, and confuses all one's notions of Australia!"

"Because you look at the past, and not at the present," said John Mangles.

"Granted," replied Paganel; "but the locomotive screeching across desert plains, volumes of smoke curling among the branches of mimosa and eucalyptus; echidnas, ornithorhynchus, and cassowary flying before express trains; savages taking the 3.30 express to go from Melbourne to Kyneton, to Castlemaine, to Sandhurst, or to Echuca—that is a sort of thing that would astonish anyone but an Englishman or an American. With the advent of railways, the poetry of the desert vanishes."

"And what does that matter if progress makes its way?" said the Major.

A loud whistle interrupted the discussion. The party were within a mile of the railway. A locomotive coming slowly from the south stopped just where the railway crossed the path of the wagon.

This railway, as Paganel had said, united the capital of Victoria to the Murray, the largest river in Australia.

This immense body of water, discovered by Sturt in 1828, rises in the Australian Alps, augmented by its tributaries, the Lachlan and the Darling, follows the northern boundary of the province of Victoria, and falls into Encounter Bay, near Adelaide. It flows through a rich and fertile country, and sheep stations increase along its course, thanks to the easy communication with Melbourne established by the railway.

This railway extended, at the time of which we are speaking, for a distance of 105 miles between Melbourne and Sandhurst, with branches to Kyneton and Castlemaine. The line in course of construction ran for seventy miles as far as Echuca, capital of the colony of Riverina, founded this same year, on the Murray.

The 37th parallel intersected the track some miles above Castlemaine, exactly at Camden Bridge, a bridge over the Loddon, one of the many tributaries of the Murray.

Towards this point Ayrton directed the course of the wagon, preceded by the horsemen of the little party, who went on at a gallop as far as Camden Bridge. No doubt curiosity made them mend their pace.

Indeed, quite a number of persons were hastening towards the railway bridge. The people from the neighbouring stations left their houses, and the shepherds their flocks, and crowded the approaches to the railway. Every now and then there was a shout, "The railway! the railway!"

Something serious must have occurred to produce such an agitation. Perhaps some terrible accident.



"Five carriages out of six fell into the bed of the Loddon."—P. 141.

Glenarvan, followed by the rest, urged on his horse. In a few minutes he arrived at Camden Bridge, and then he became aware of the cause of such an excitement.

A fearful accident had occurred ; not a collision, but a train had gone off the line, and then there had been a fall. The affair recalled the worst disasters of American railways. The river crossed by the railway was full of broken carriages and the engine. Whether the weight of the train had been too much for the bridge, or whether the train had gone off the rails, the fact remained that five carriages out of six fell into the bed of the Loddon, dragged down by the locomotive. The sixth carriage, miraculously preserved by the breaking of the coupling chain, remained on the rails, six feet from the abyss. Below nothing was discernible but a melancholy heap of twisted and blackened axles, shattered wagons, bent rails, charred sleepers ; the boiler, burst by the shock, had scattered its plates to enormous distances. From this shapeless mass of ruins flames and black smoke still rose. After the fearful fall came fire, more fearful still ! Great tracks of blood, scattered limbs, charred trunks of bodies, showed here and there ; none could guess how many victims lay under those ruins.

Glenarvan, Paganel, the Major, Mangles, mixing with the crowd, heard the current talk. Every one tried to account for the accident, while doing his utmost to save what could be saved.

“The bridge must have broken,” said one.

“Not a bit of it. The bridge is whole enough ;

they must have forgotten to close it to let the train pass. That is all."

It was, in fact, a swing bridge, which opened for the convenience of the boats. Had the guard, by an unpardonable oversight, omitted to close it for the passage of the train, so that the train, coming on at full speed, was precipitated into the Loddon?

This hypothesis seemed very admissible; for although one half of the bridge lay beneath the ruins of the train, the other half, drawn up to the opposite shore, hung, still unharmed, by its chains. No one could doubt that an oversight on the part of the guard had caused the catastrophe.

The accident had occurred in the night, to the express train which left Melbourne at 11.45 in the evening. About a quarter past three in the morning, twenty-five minutes after leaving Castlemaine, it arrived at Camden Bridge, where the terrible disaster befel. The passengers and guards of the last and only remaining carriage at once tried to obtain help. But the telegraph, whose posts were lying on the ground, could not be worked. It was three hours before the authorities from Castlemaine reached the scene of the accident, and it was six o'clock in the morning when the salvage party was organized, under the direction of Mr. Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of the colony, and a detachment of police, commanded by an inspector. The squatters and their "hands" lent their aid, and directed their efforts first to extinguishing the fire which raged in the ruined heap with unconquerable violence.

A few unrecognizable bodies lay on the slope of the embankment, but from that blazing mass no living thing could be saved. The fire had done its work too speedily. Of the passengers ten only survived—those in the last carriage. The railway authorities sent a locomotive to bring them back to Castlemaine.

Lord Glenarvan, having introduced himself to the surveyor-general, entered into conversation with him and the inspector of police. The latter was a tall, thin man, imperturbably cool, and, whatever he may have felt, allowed no trace of it to appear on his features. He contemplated this calamity as a mathematician does a problem; he was seeking to solve it, and to find the unknown; and when Glenarvan observed, "This is a great misfortune," he quietly replied, "Better than that, my Lord."

"Better than that?" cried Glenarvan. "I do not understand you."

"It is better than a misfortune, it is a crime!" he replied, in the same quiet tone.

Glenarvan looked inquiringly at Mr. Mitchell for a solution.

"Yes, my Lord," replied the surveyor-general, "our inquiries have resulted in the conclusion that the catastrophe is the result of a crime. The last luggage-van has been robbed. The surviving passengers were attacked by a gang of five or six villains. The bridge was intentionally opened, and not left open by the negligence of the guard; and connecting with this fact the guard's disappearance, we may conclude that

the wretched fellow was an accomplice of these ruffians."

The police-officer shook his head at this inference.

"You do not agree with me?" said Mr. Mitchell.

"No, not as to the complicity of the guard."

"Well, but granting that complicity, we may attribute the crime to the natives who haunt the Murray. Without him the blacks could never have opened a swing-bridge; they know nothing of its mechanism."

"Exactly so," said the police-inspector.

"Well," added Mr. Mitchell, "we have the evidence of a boatman whose boat passed Camden Bridge at 10.40 p.m., that the bridge was properly shut after he passed."

"True."

"Well, after that, I cannot see any doubt as to the complicity of the guard."

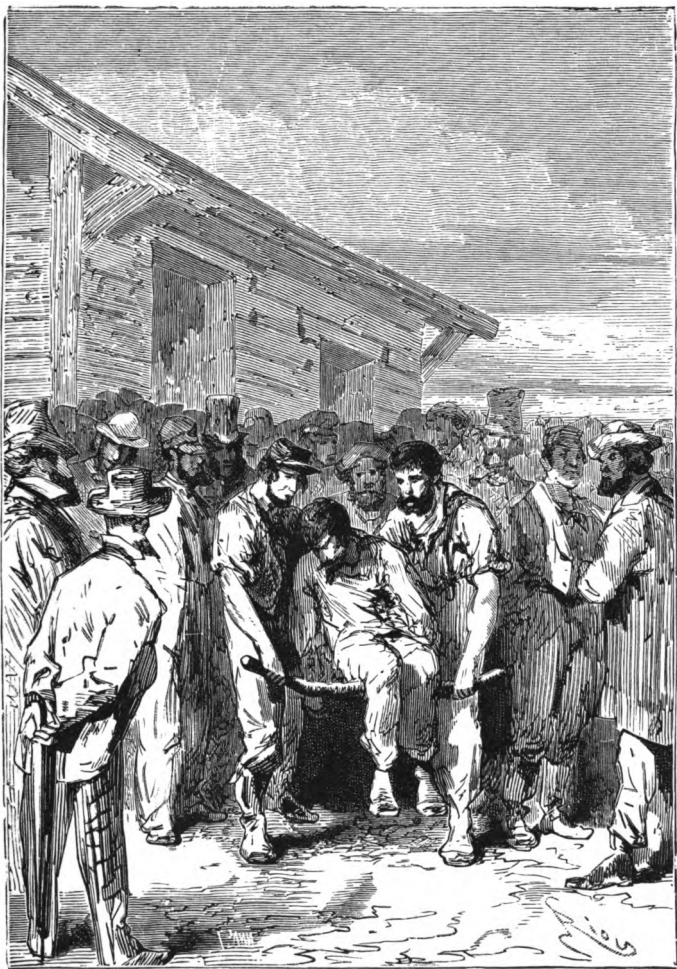
The police-officer shook his head gently, but continuously.

"Then you don't attribute the crime to the natives?"

"Not at all."

"To whom then?"

Just at this moment a noise was heard from about half-a-mile up the river. A crowd had gathered, and quickly increased. They soon reached the station, and in their midst were two men carrying a corpse. It was the body of the guard, quite cold, stabbed to the heart. The murderers had no doubt hoped, by dragging their victim to a distance, that the police would be put on a wrong scent in their first inquiries.



"It was the body of the guard."—P. 144.

This discovery, at any rate, justified the doubts of the police-inspector. The poor blacks had had no hand in the matter.

"Those who dealt that blow," said he, "were already well used to this little instrument;" and so saying he produced a pair of "darbies," a kind of handcuff made of a double ring of iron secured by a lock.

"I shall soon have the pleasure of presenting them with these bracelets as a New Year's gift."

"Then you suspect——"

"Some folks who came out free in Her Majesty's ships."

"What! convicts?" cried Paganel, who recognized the formula employed in the Australian colonies.

"I thought," said Glenarvan, "convicts had no right in the province of Victoria."

"Bah!" said the inspector, "if they have no right, they take it! They escape sometimes, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, this lot have come straight from Perth, and, take my word for it, they will soon be there again."

Mr. Mitchell nodded acquiescence in the words of the police-inspector. At this moment the wagon arrived at the level crossing of the railway. Glenarvan wished to spare the ladies the horrible spectacle at Camden Bridge. He took courteous leave of the surveyor-general, and made a sign to the rest to follow him.

"There is no reason," said he, "for delaying our journey."

When they reached the wagon, Glenarvan merely mentioned to Lady Helena that there had been a railway accident, without a hint of the crime that had played so great a part in it; neither did he make mention of the presence of a band of convicts in the neighbourhood, reserving that piece of information solely for Ayrton's ear. The little procession now crossed the railway some two hundred yards below the bridge, and then resumed their eastward course.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIRST PRIZE FOR GEOGRAPHY.

ABOUT two miles from the railway, the plain terminated in a range of low hills, and it was not long before the wagon entered a succession of narrow gorges and capricious windings, out of which it emerged into a most charming region, where grand trees, not closely planted, but in scattered groups, were growing with absolutely tropical luxuriance. Among the most noticeable were the "casuarinas," which seemed to have borrowed their noble trunk from the oak, their odour from the acacia, and their leaves from the pine. With their branches mingled the curious cones of the *Banksia latifolia*, distinguished for extreme elegance and slenderness. Large shrubs with drooping branches rose against the clumps, and looked like green water running out of over-full vessels. The eye got bewildered with so many wonders of nature, and hardly knew which to admire most.

The little party had stopped for an instant in obedience to Lady Helena's wish. Ayrton had pulled up his team, and the great wooden disks of the wagon

had cast their grating noise over the quartzose sand. Long stretches of rich grass lay among the trees, divided at intervals by little mounds arranged with almost the regularity of a chess-board, though now fast disappearing below the luxuriant herbage.

Paganel understood this verdant solitude at a glance. These formal squares, so poetically laid out for eternal sleep, were rarely met with now on the Australian continent.

"These are the graves of the dead," he said.

He was right. This was a native burying-ground, but so green and shady, and so enlivened by the merry songs of birds, and altogether so charming, that it awakened no gloomy associations in the mind. It might rather have been taken for a garden of Eden, where death was unknown; it seemed made for the living. But these tombs, religiously kept by the aborigines, are becoming effaced already by increasing vegetation. The Australian himself has been driven far from the spot where his ancestors lie, and colonization will soon abandon these resting-places of the dead to the rough hoof of cattle. Many a one which covers a whole generation is now trodden by the careless traveller.

Paganel and Robert had gone ahead of the others, and were exploring the *tumuli*, talking busily and instructing each other, for the polite Frenchman always maintained he was a gainer by young Grant's conversation. They had not gone a quarter of a mile, however, when Lord Glenarvan noticed them stop, and then

dismount and stoop down towards the ground. Judging by their expressive gestures, they were examining some very curious object.

Ayrton goaded on his bullocks, and the wagon was soon on the spot. The cause of the halt and astonishment was speedily discovered in the shape of a little native boy lying fast asleep beneath the shade of a magnificent banksia. He was dressed in European garb, and seemed about eight years of age. There was no mistaking the characteristic features of his race; the crisped hair, the nearly black skin, the flattened nose, the thick lips, the unusual length of the arms, immediately classed him among the aborigines of the interior. But a degree of intelligence appeared in his face that showed some educational influences must have been at work on his savage, untrained nature.

Lady Helena, whose interest was greatly excited by this spectacle, got out of the wagon, followed by Mary, and presently the whole company surrounded the peaceful little sleeper.

"Poor child!" said Mary Grant. "Is he lost, I wonder, in this desert?"

"I suppose," said Lady Helena, "he has come a long way to visit this part. No doubt some he loves are lying here."

"But he can't be left here," added Robert. "We must——"

His compassionate sentence remained unfinished, for just at that moment the child turned over in his sleep, and, to the extreme surprise of everybody, there

was a large label on his shoulders, on which the following was written:—

“TOLINE.

To be conducted to Echuca.

Care of Jeffries Smith, Railway Porter.

Prepaid.”

“That’s the English all over!” exclaimed Paganel. “They send off a child just as they would luggage, and book him like a parcel. I heard it was done, certainly, but I could not believe it before!”

“Poor child!” said Lady Helena. “Could he have been in the train that got off the line at Camden Bridge? Perhaps his parents were killed, and he is left alone in the world!”

“I don’t think so, Madame,” replied John Mangles. “That card rather goes to prove he was travelling alone.”

“He is waking up!” said Mary.

And so he was. His eyes slowly opened and then closed again, pained by the glare of light. But Lady Helena took his hand, and he jumped up at once, and looked about him in bewilderment at the sight of so many strangers. He seemed half-frightened at first, but the presence of Lady Helena reassured him.

“Do you understand English, my little man?” asked the young lady.

“I understand it and speak it,” replied the child, in fluent enough English, but with a marked accent.

His pronunciation was like a Frenchman’s.

“What is your name?” asked Lady Helena.

“Toliné,” replied the little native.



"There was a large label on his shoulders."—P. 150.

"Toliné!" exclaimed Paganel. "Ah! I think that means 'bark of a tree' in Australian."

Toliné nodded, and looked again at the travellers.

"Where do you come from?" inquired Lady Helena.

"From Melbourne, by the railway from Sandhurst."

"Were you in the accident at Camden Bridge?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, sir," was Toliné's reply; "but the God of the Bible protected me."

"Are you travelling alone?"

"Yes, alone. The Reverend Paxton put me in charge of Jeffries Smith, but unfortunately the poor man was killed."

"And you did not know any one else in the train?"

"No one, Madame; but God watches over children, and never forsakes them."

Toliné said this in soft, quiet tones, which went to the heart. When he mentioned the name of God his voice was grave, and his eyes beamed with all the fervour that animated his young soul.

This religious enthusiasm at so tender an age was easily explained. The child was one of the aborigines, baptized by the English missionaries, and trained by them in all the rigid principles of the Methodist church. His calm replies, proper behaviour, and even his sombre garb, made him look like a little Reverend already.

"But where was he going all alone in these soli-

tudes, and why had he left Camden Bridge?" Lady Helena asked him about this.

"I was returning to my tribe in the Lachlan," he replied; "I wished to see my family again."

"Are they Australians?" inquired John Mangles.

"Yes, Australians of the Lachlan," replied Toliné.

"Have you a father and mother?" said Robert Grant.

"Yes, my brother," returned Toliné, holding out his hand to little Grant.

Robert was so touched by the word brother, that he kissed the black child, and they were friends forthwith.

The whole party were so interested in these replies of the little Australian savage, that they all sat round him in a listening group. But the sun had meantime sunk behind the tall trees, and as a few miles would not greatly retard their progress, and the spot they were in would be suitable for a halt, Glenarvan gave orders to prepare their camp for the night at once. Ayrton unfastened the bullocks, and turned them out to feed at will. The tent was pitched, and Olbinett got the supper ready. Toliné consented, after some difficulty, to share it, though he was hungry enough. He took his seat beside Robert, who chose out all the tit-bits for his new friend. Toliné accepted them with a shy grace that was very charming.

The conversation with him, however, was still kept up, for every one felt an interest in the child, and wanted to talk to him, and hear his history. It was simple enough. He was one of the poor native children con-

fided to the care of charitable societies by the neighbouring tribes. The Australian aborigines are gentle and inoffensive, never exhibiting the fierce hatred towards their conquerors which characterises the New Zealanders, and possibly a few of the races of Northern Australia. They often go to the large towns, such as Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, and walk about in very primitive costume. They go to barter their few articles of industry, hunting and fishing implements, weapons, etc., and some of the chiefs, from pecuniary motives, no doubt, willingly leave their children to profit by the advantages of a gratuitous education in English.

This was how Toliné's parents had acted. They were true Australian savages, living in the Lachlan, a vast region lying beyond the Murray. The child had been in Melbourne for five years, and during that time had never once seen any of his own people. And yet the imperishable feeling of kindred was still so strong in his heart, that he had dared to brave this journey over the wilds to visit his tribe once more, scattered though perchance it might be, and his family, even should he find it decimated.

"And after you have kissed your parents are you coming back to Melbourne?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, Madame," replied Toliné, looking at the lady with a loving expression.

"And what are you going to be some day?" she continued.

"I am going to snatch my brothers from misery and ignorance. I am going to teach them, to bring

them to know and love God. I am going to be a missionary."

Words like those, and spoken with such animation from a child of only eight years, might have provoked a smile in light, scoffing auditors, but they were understood and appreciated by the grave Scotch, who admired the courage of this young disciple, already armed for the battle. Even Paganel was stirred to the depths of his heart, and felt his warmer sympathy awakened for the poor child.

To speak the truth, up to that moment he did not care much for a savage in European attire. He had not come to Australia to see Australians in coats and trousers. He preferred them simply tattooed, and this conventional dress jarred on his preconceived notions. But the child's genuine religious fervour won him over completely. Indeed, the wind-up of the conversation converted the worthy geographer into his best friend.

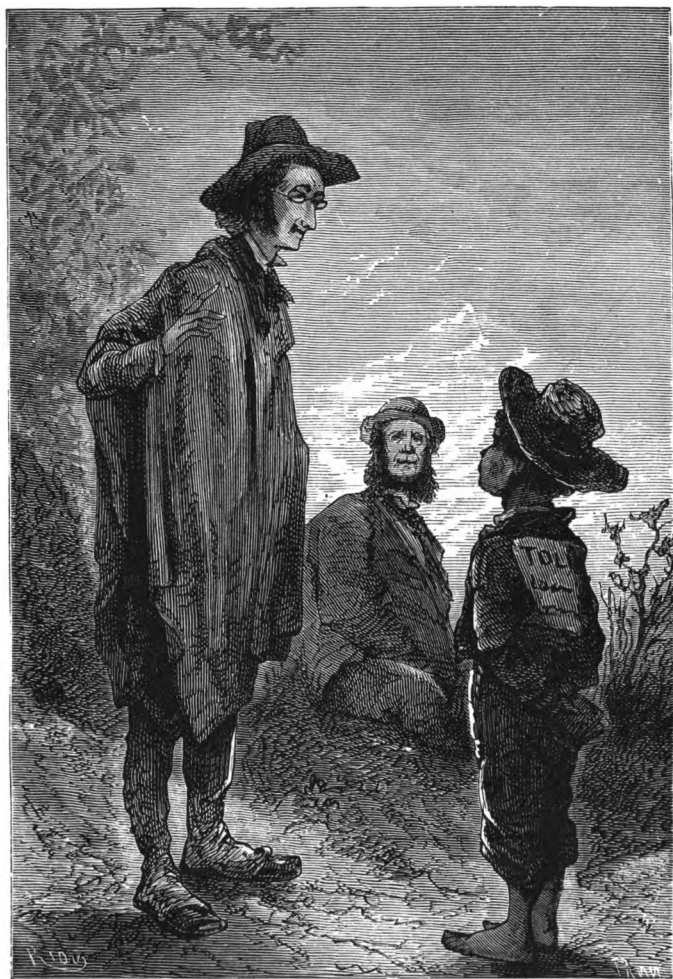
It was in reply to a question Lady Helena had asked, that Toliné said he was studying at the Normal School in Melbourne, and that the principal was the Rev. Mr. Paxton.

"And what do they teach you?" she went on to say.

"They teach me the Bible, and mathematics, and geography."

Paganel pricked up his ears at this, and said, "Indeed, geography!"

"Yes, sir," replied Toliné; "and I had the first prize for geography before the Christmas holidays."



“ ‘They teach me the Bible.’ ”—P. 154.

"You had the first prize for geography, my boy?"

"Yes, sir. Here it is," returned Toliné, pulling a book out of his pocket.

It was a Bible, 32mo size, and well bound. On the first page was written the words—

"NORMAL SCHOOL, MELBOURNE.

"First Prize for Geography.

"TOLINE of the Lachlan."

Paganel was beside himself. An Australian well versed in geography! This was marvellous, and he could not help kissing Toliné on both cheeks, just as if he had been the Reverend Mr. Paxton himself, on the day of the distribution of prizes. Paganel need not have been so amazed at this circumstance, however, for it is frequent enough in Australian schools. The little savages are very quick in learning geography. They learn it eagerly, and, on the other hand, are perfectly averse to the science of arithmetic.

Toliné could not understand this outburst of affection on the part of the Frenchman, and looked so puzzled that Lady Helena thought she had better inform him that Paganel was a celebrated geographer and a distinguished professor on occasion.

"A professor of geography!" cried Toliné. "Oh, sir, do question me!"

"Question you? Well, I'd like nothing better. Indeed, I was going to do it without your leave. I should very much like to see how they teach geography in the Normal School of Melbourne."

“And suppose Toliné trips you up, Paganel!” said McNabbs.

“What a likely idea!” exclaimed the geographer. “Trip up the Secretary of the Geographical Society of France.”

Their examination then commenced, after Paganel had settled his spectacles firmly on his nose, drawn himself up to his full height, and put on a solemn voice becoming to a professor.

“Pupil Toliné, stand up.”

As Toliné was already standing, he could not get any higher, but he waited modestly for the geographer’s questions.

“Pupil Toliné, what are the five divisions of the globe?”

“Oceanica, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe.”

“Perfectly so. Now we’ll take Oceanica first; where are we at this moment? What are the principal divisions?”

“Australia, belonging to the English; New Zealand, belonging to the English; Tasmania, belonging to the English. The islands of Chatham, Auckland, Macquarie, Kermadec, Makin, Maraki, are also belonging to the English.”

“Very good, and New Caledonia, the Sandwich Islands, the Mendana, the Pomoton?”

“They are islands under the Protectorate of Great Britain.”

“What!” cried Paganel, “under the Protectorate of Great Britain. I rather think on the contrary, that France——”

"France," said the child, with an astonished look.

"Well, well," said Paganel; "is that what they teach you in the Melbourne Normal School?"

"Yes, sir. Isn't it right?"

"Oh yes, yes, perfectly right. All Oceanica belongs to the English. That's an understood thing. Go on."

Paganel's face betrayed both surprise and annoyance, to the great delight of the Major.

The catechiser continued.

"Let us go on to Asia," said the geographer.

"Asia," replied Toliné, "is an immense country. Capital—Calcutta. Chief towns—Bombay, Madras, Calicut, Aden, Malacca, Singapore, Pegu, Colombo. The Laccadive Islands, the Maldives, the Chagos, etc., etc., belonging to the English."

"Very good, pupil Toliné. And now for Africa."

"Africa comprises two chief colonies—the Cape on the south, capital Capetown; and on the west the English settlements, chief city, Sierra Leone."

"Capital!" said Paganel, beginning to enter into this perfectly taught but Anglo-coloured fanciful geography. "As to Algeria, Morocco, Egypt—they are all struck out of the Britannic cities. Let us pass on, pray, to America."

"It is divided," said Toliné, promptly, "into North and South America. The former belongs to the English in Canada, New Brunswick, New Scotland, and the United States, under the government of President Johnson."

"President Johnson," cried Paganel, "the successor of the great and good Lincoln, assassinated by a mad fanatic of the slave party. Capital; nothing could be better. And as to South America, with its Guiana, its archipelago of South Shetland, its Georgia, Jamaica, Trinidad, etc., that belongs to the English too! Well, I'll not be the one to dispute that point. But, Toliné, I should like to know your opinion of Europe, or rather your professor's."

"Europe?" said Toliné not at all understanding Paganel's excitement.

"Yes, Europe! Who does Europe belong to?"

"Why, to the English," replied Toliné, as if the fact was quite settled.

"I much doubt it," returned Paganel. "But how's that, Toliné, for I want to know that?"

"England, Ireland, Scotland, Malta, Jersey and Guernsey, the Ionian Islands, the Hebrides, the Shetlands, and the Orkneys."

"Yes, yes, my lad; but there are other states you forgot to mention."

"What are they?" replied the child, not the least disconcerted.

"Spain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, France," answered Paganel.

"They are provinces, not states," said Toliné.

"Well, that beats all!" exclaimed Paganel, tearing off his spectacles.

"Yes," continued the child. "Spain — capital, Gibraltar."

“Admirable! perfect! sublime! And France, for I am French, and I should like to know to whom I belong.”

“France,” said Toliné, quietly, “is an English province; chief city, Calais.”

“Calais!” cried Paganel. “So you think Calais still belongs to the English?”

“Certainly.”

“And that it is the capital of France.”

“Yes, sir; and it is there that the Governor, Lord Napoleon, lives.”

This was too much for Paganel’s risible faculties. He burst out laughing. Toliné did not know what to make of him. He had done his best to answer every question put to him. But the singularity of the answers were not his blame; indeed, he never imagined anything singular about them. However, he took it all quietly, and waited for the professor to recover himself. These peals of laughter were quite incomprehensible to him.

“You see,” said Major McNabbs, laughing, “I was right. The pupil could enlighten you after all.”

“Most assuredly, friend Major,” replied the geographer. “So that’s the way they teach geography in Melbourne! They do it well, these professors in the Normal School! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceanica, the whole world belongs to the English. My conscience! with such an ingenious education it is no wonder the natives submit. Ah, well, Toliné,

my boy, does the moon belong to England too?" *

"She will some day," replied the young savage, gravely.

This was the climax. Paganel could not stand any more. He was obliged to go away and take his laugh out, for he was actually exploding with mirth, and he went fully a quarter of a mile from the encampment before his equilibrium was restored.

Meanwhile, Glenarvan looked up a geography they had brought among their books. It was "Richardson's Compendium," a work in great repute in England, and more in agreement with modern science than the manuals in use at the Normal School in Melbourne.

"Here, my child," he said to Toliné, "take this book and keep it. You have a few wrong ideas about geography, which it would be well for you to rectify. I will give you this as a keepsake from me."

Toliné took the book silently; but, after examining it attentively, he shook his head with an air of incredulity, and could not even make up his mind to put it in his pocket.

By this time night had closed in; it was ten p.m., and time to think of rest, if they were to start betimes next day. Robert offered his friend Toliné half his bed, and the little fellow accepted it.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant withdrew to the

* We regret that M. Paganel did not give the name of the publisher of this very remarkable geography, as it would be an interesting fact to add to the next edition of "Things not Generally Known." (Translator.)

wagon, and the others lay down in the tent, Paganel's merry peals still mingling with the low sweet song of the wild magpie.

But in the morning at six o'clock, when the sunshine wakened the sleepers, they looked in vain for the little Australian. Toliné had disappeared. Was he in haste to get to the Lachlan district? or was he hurt by Paganel's laughter? No one could say.

But when Lady Helena opened her eyes she discovered a fresh branch of mimosa leaves lying across her, and Paganel found a book in his vest pocket, which turned out to be "Richardson's Geography."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MINES AT MOUNT ALEXANDER.

IN 1814 Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, President of the Royal Geographical Society of London, found out by studying their conformation many remarkable points of identity between the Ural Mountains, and the chain which runs from north to south, not far from the southern coast of Australia.

Now the Ural being an auriferous range, it struck the learned geologist that the precious metal might very likely be found in the Australian Cordilleras also, and he was not mistaken, as events proved.

Two years later, specimens of gold were sent him from New South Wales, and a great number of Cornish labourers emigrated, in consequence, to the auriferous regions of New Holland.

The first nuggets in South Australia were discovered by Mr. Francis Dutton, and in New South Wales by Messrs. Forbes and Smyth.

The first impulse given, miners flocked thither from all parts of the globe—English, American, Italian, French, German, Chinese; but it was not till

April 3, 1851, that Mr. Hargrave discovered the richest strata, and offered to reveal the spot to the Governor, Sir Charles Fitz Roy, for the modest sum of five hundred pounds. His offer was not accepted, but the discovery got noised abroad, and gold-seekers directed their steps to Summerhill and Leni's Pond. The town of Ophir was built, and the richness of the mines fully justified its biblical name.

But up to this time Victoria had never been mentioned in connection with it, though it was about to bear the palm away for the abundance of its gold deposits.

It was some months later, in August, 1851, that the first gold heaps of that province were dug up, and soon in four different districts there were large mining operations carried on. Those four districts were Ballarat, the Ovens, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander—all very rich, but at the Ovens the superabundance of water was an obstacle; at Ballarat, the gold was so unequally distributed that labour was often fruitless; and at Bendigo, the soil was very unfavourable for working the mines. It was only at Mount Alexander that every condition of success was found, and the precious ore obtained there fetched the highest price in all the gold markets of the world, its value being £57 14s. a pound.

It was through this very region that the 37th parallel led the search party for Captain Grant.

On the 31st of December, after marching the whole day over a very uneven ground which fatigued both

horses and bullocks, they perceived the rounded summits of Mount Alexander. They encamped for the night in a narrow gorge of the range. They had not entered the immediate gold region. It was not till next day, the first day of the new year, 1866, that the wagon made its first rest in the gold fields.

James Paganel and his companions were delighted to have a chance of seeing the famous mines, called *Geboor* in the Australian language. It was here that a horde of adventurers, thieves and honest men alike, had flocked in crowds. At the first news of the great discovery, towns and stations and ships were deserted. The gold fever became an epidemic, as contagious as the plague, and how many died of it who thought fortune already in their grasp. Bountiful nature, it was said, had sowed millions of treasure over more than 25 degrees of latitude in this wonderful country. It was harvest time, and the reapers rushed to the ingathering.

Everybody must be a *digger*. No other calling had a chance, and though it is true that many a one sank beneath the toil, others, on the contrary, were enriched by the first stroke of the pickaxe. The failures were hushed up, the successes noised abroad. These strokes of fortune were echoed to the ends of the globe, and the shores of Australia were speedily flooded with ambitious adventurers. In Melbourne alone during the last four months of the year 1852, there was an influx of 54,000 emigrants, a whole army, but an army disorganized and undisciplined, an army on the morrow

after a battle which has not been won ; in a word, 54,000 pillagers of the worst description.

During those first years of mad intoxication the disorder was inexpressible. However, the English, with their accustomed energy, soon made themselves masters of the situation, and Glenarvan found no such disorders now. Thirteen years had elapsed since that period, and now mining operations were carried on in the most methodical manner under strict management.

Besides, many of the holes were exhausted. They had been completely bottomed. And little wonder that these treasures of nature had been drained, when out of the soil of Victoria alone £63,107,781 sterling had been dug between 1852 and 1858 ! The emigrants had decreased in proportion, and had gone off to countries which were still virgin. The gold-fields newly discovered in Otago and Marlborough in New Zealand attracted multitudes.*.

About 11 a.m. the centre of the diggings was reached. The travellers found themselves in a regular town, with factories, bank, church, barracks, cottages, and newspaper office, hotels, farms, villas, nothing was wanting. There was even a theatre at ten shillings a seat, which was much thronged. They were playing a

* It is possible, however, the diggers may be mistaken in going there, for the auriferous strata are not exhausted, or anything like it. According to the latest accounts of Australia, it is estimated that the gold deposits cover 50,000 of hectares. The approximate weight of quartz in which the ore is enclosed would be 20,650 milliards of kilogrammes, and to exhaust these veins, 100,000 miners would require to be at work for three centuries. Altogether, the value of the auriferous wealth of Australia is estimated at 664 milliards, 250 millions of francs.

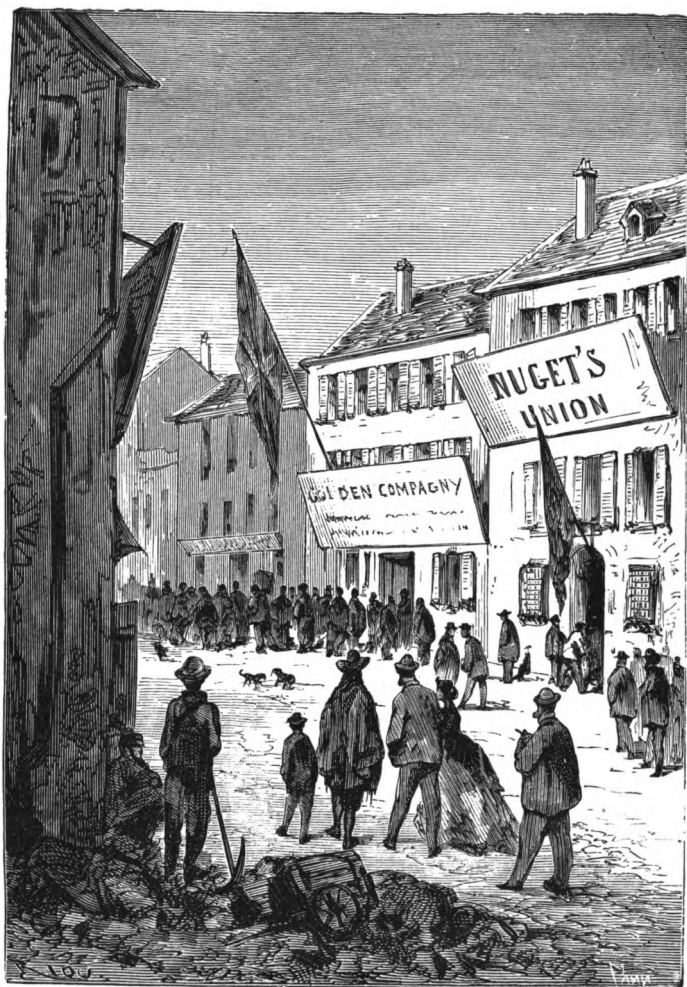
piece called "Francis Obadiah, the Lucky Digger." The hero, in the closing act, makes one last despairing stroke with his pick, and turns up a nugget of the most improbable weight.

Glenarvan had a curiosity to visit these diggings, and therefore sent on the wagon in charge of Ayrton and Mulrady, intending to rejoin them some hours later. Paganel was enchanted at this arrangement, and, as usual, made himself the guide and *cicerone* of the little party.

Following his advice, they first went to the Bank. The streets were wide and macadamized, and carefully watered. Gigantic advertisements of the "Golden Company (Limited)," "The Digger's General Office," "The Nugget's Union," solicited their gaze. The association of labour and capital had replaced the independent operations of the miner. Everywhere the machines could be heard crushing quartz and washing sand.

Beyond the houses were the "lots," in immense stretches of "diggings." Miners were now engaged there in working for companies at a high rate of payment. It was impossible to count the holes in the ground. The iron of the pickaxes shone in the sunlight, and flashed continually as stroke after stroke fell. Here were specimens of all nations. These hired workers never quarrelled, and executed their task in silence.

"You must not think, however," said Paganel, "that none of those eager fevered gold-seekers who risked their all in the mines, are to be found now on the



"Paganel, as usual, made himself the guide of the little party."—P. 166.

Australian soil. I know most of the diggers at present are hired by companies, and they must be, as the auriferous lands are either sold or farmed by Government. But there is one chance of getting rich still left, even if a man can neither rent nor buy."

"What is that?" asked Lady Helena.

"The chance of 'jumping,'" replied Paganel; "so you see we who have not the least claim here, may, perhaps, of course by universal good luck, make our fortunes."

"But how?" said the Major.

"By 'jumping,' as I have just had the honour of telling you."

"What is 'jumping?'" inquired McNabbs again.

"It is a usage among the miners, which often leads to violence and disorder, but has never been able to be put down by the authorities."

"Make haste and explain, Paganel, for you are making our mouths water," said McNabbs.

"Well, it is agreed that any *claim* which has not been worked for twenty-four hours, except on great festivals, shall be forfeited to the public. Anyone may take it that likes, and enrich himself if the Fates are propitious; so Robert, my boy, you had best look about for one of these deserted holes, and take possession of it."

"Oh, Monsieur Paganel," said Mary; "don't put such ideas into my brother's head."

"I am only joking, my dear Miss Mary," said Paganel, "and Robert knows that well enough. He a

miner! To dig the earth and plough it, and cultivate it, and sow seed and expect a plentiful harvest in return, is all very well; but to burrow below like moles, and about as blind as they, for the sake of a handful of gold, is a pitiful calling, and one must be forsaken of God and man to follow it."

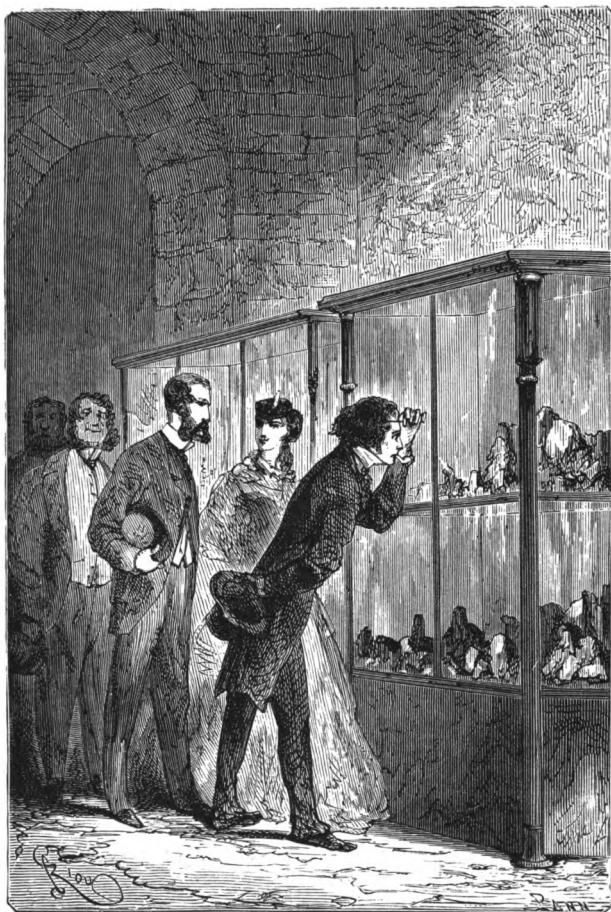
After visiting the principal mine, and going over a good deal of the district, the soil of which consisted principally of argillaceous quartz, schist, and sand, the powdery *débris* of the rocks, the travellers reached the Bank.

It was an immense building, and on its roof waved the Union Jack. Lord Glenarvan was received by the Inspector-general, who did the honours of the establishment.

This was the general place of deposit for the different companies' mining receipts. Very different from the early days, when the miners were at the mercy of the traders, who only gave 53s. an ounce for the gold they sold again in Melbourne for 65s. True, the trader had all the risk of the transport, and as highwaymen multiplied, the escort did not always arrive at its destination.

Curious specimens of gold were exhibited to the visitors, and some interesting details were given by the Inspector about the different methods of extracting the ore.

The precious metal is found in two forms generally—water-worn gold, and in quartz. It is found as rough ore mixed with alluvial soil, or enclosed in quartz. The



"They went through the Mineralogical Museum of the Bank."—P. 169

process of extraction depends, consequently, on the district.

The gold-dust is found in the beds of torrents, in valleys and ravines.

The rough ore, on the contrary, the gangue of which has been decomposed by the action of the air, is concentrated in patches, lying in little heaps in the form of what miners call pockets. Some of these pockets are a fortune in themselves. At Mount Alexander, the gold is specially found in argillaceous beds, and in the interstices of the slaty cleavage. Here are nests of little heaps, and the lucky miner often has put his hand at once on the great prize of the whole deposit.

After the different specimens of ore had been inspected by the visitors, they went through the Mineralogical Museum of the Bank. There they saw, classified and labelled, all the substances which compose the Australian soil. Gold is not its only treasure, for, in sober truth, the country may be called an immense casket of nature, in which she has stored all her jewels. In the glass cases the white topaz sparkled, rivalling the Brazilian species, and also the garnet, the epidote, a sort of silicate of a beautiful green colour; balass rubies, represented by the scarlet spinal, and by a rose-coloured variety of the greatest beauty; light-blue and dark-blue sapphires, a species of corundum, and as highly esteemed as those of Malabar and Thibet; brilliant rutiles, and a small crystal diamond, which was found on the banks of the Turon. Nothing was wanting to complete the collection of precious stones, and gold for the setting

was close at hand. One could hardly wish more, unless to have found them all ready mounted.

Glenarvan took leave of the Inspector, with many thanks for his courtesy.

The travellers next proceeded to make the tour of the diggings.

Little as Paganel troubled himself about this world's goods, he could not go a step without examining the ground. Instinct seemed stronger than himself, and his companions joked him about it in vain. Every minute he kept stooping down, picking up a pebble off a piece of gangue or fragment of quartz, which he examined carefully, and then threw down in disdain. He went on this way during the whole promenade.

"What's up, Paganel?" asked the Major. "Have you lost anything?"

"Of course," replied Paganel, "one has always lost what he has not found in a country of gold and precious stones like this. I can't tell you how I should like to carry away a nugget weighing a few ounces, or even twenty pounds and more."

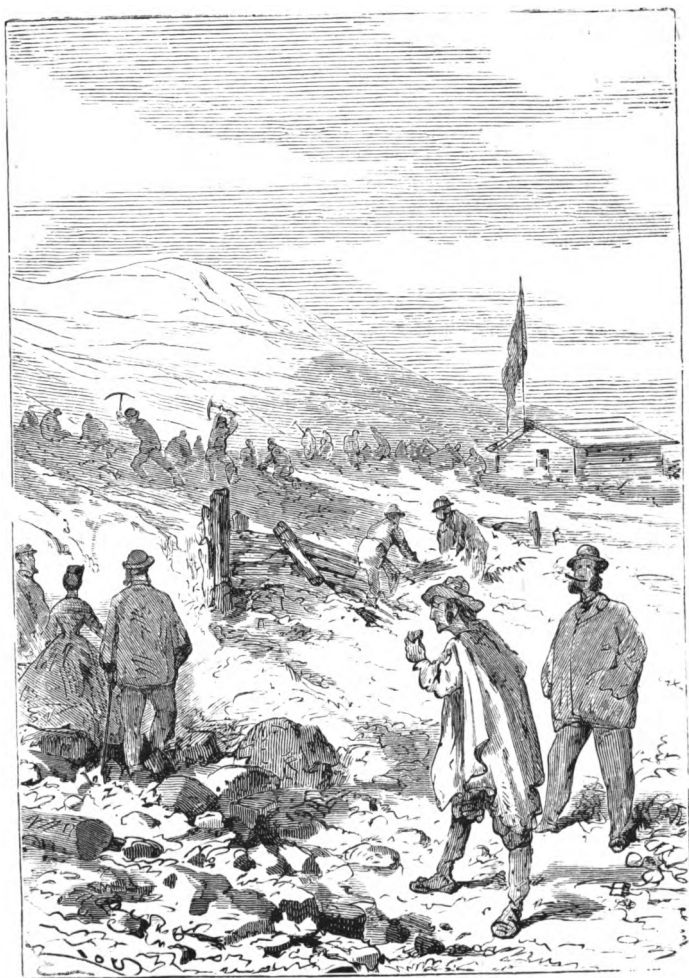
"What would you do with it, my good friend?" asked Glenarvan.

"Oh, I shouldn't be at a loss. I should pay homage to my country with it. I should deposit it in the Bank of France."

"Would it be accepted?"

"Most certainly, in the shape of railway scrip."

They all congratulated Paganel on his novel fashion of presenting his nugget to his country; and Lady



"Every minute he kept stooping down, picking up a pebble."—P. 179

Helena heartily wished he might pick up the largest nugget in the world.

They had now gone over the greater part of the diggings, and everywhere work was regularly being carried on, though in a lifeless mechanical manner.

After two hours' walking, Paganel pointed out a decent-looking tavern, and proposed they should turn in there, and rest until it was time to rejoin the wagon. Lady Helena consented, and, as there's no getting on in a tavern without refreshments, Paganel desired the waiter to bring some Australian beverage.

A "nobbler" was immediately handed round to each person; the said "nobbler" being neither more nor less than grog, but made the inverse way. Instead of a small glass of brandy being put into a large glass of water, it was a small glass of water in a large glass of brandy and sugar. This was rather too Australian, and, to the great astonishment of the innkeeper, the said "nobbler" was transformed into the true British grog, by the addition of a great caraffe of water.

Then they talked of the miners and mining. Paganel, satisfied as he was by what he had seen, confessed that he would have liked to have seen Mount Alexander at the time of the first diggings.

"The ground, then," he said, "was covered with holes, completely overrun with legions of busy ants! And such ants! All the emigrants were eager enough, but some had little forethought. The gold drove them to mad excesses. They drank it, they gambled it, and this inn where we are now was a 'hell,' in the digger's

slang. Throws of the dice led to thrusts of knives. The police were powerless, and often the governor of the colony had to call out the regular troops, to put down the outbreaks among the miners. However, he was successful, and made each digger pay a licence, though he had some difficulty in enforcing this ; yet on the whole the disorders were not so flagrant as in California."

"Any one could be a digger, then ?" said Lady Helena.

"Yes, Madame, they did not need a bachelor's degree for that ; two good arms were enough. The greater part of the miserable adventurers came without a penny in their pockets, all their wealth being a pickaxe, or in some, poorer still, a knife ; and they all brought a fury to the help of the labour which no honest calling could have inspired. These auriferous districts presented a strange spectacle. The ground was covered with tents, tarpauling, huts, and sheds of mud, and planks, and branches. In the centre was the Government camp, with the British flag waving over it, the blue canvas tents of its agents, and the locations of the changers, gold-buyers, and traders, who speculated on this assemblage of riches and poverty, fattening alike on both. You would have seen the diggers, with their long beards and red flannel shirts, living in water and mud. The air was filled with the continuous noise of the picks, and fetid exhalations rose from the carcasses of animals left to rot on the ground. A stifling cloud of dust covered the whole scene. The rate of mortality among these unfortunate beings was frightfully high, and in a more

unhealthy climate the population would have been decimated by typhus fever. It would have been bad enough if all the adventurers had succeeded ; but so many had no compensation for their misery, for it has been calculated, and very truly, that for one miner that enriched himself, a hundred, two hundred, perhaps, even a thousand, died in poverty and despair."

"Could you tell us, Paganel," asked Glenarvan, "how they set to work to extract the ore?"

"Nothing was easier," replied Paganel. "The first miners were gold-seekers, such as are still to be found in parts of the Cevennes in France. Now there are companies which proceed differently. They begin at the source, they go to the vein which produces the scales, the dust, and the nuggets. But the first gold-seekers contented themselves with washing the auriferous sand ; that was all. They scooped out the earth, and collected what seemed to promise gold, and employed water to separate the precious particles. The washing was done by means of a machine called a 'cradle,' an American invention. It is a box five or six feet long, a sort of open coffin, divided into two compartments. The first contained a coarse sieve laid over fine sieves. The second narrowed towards the end. They put the sand into the upper sieve, and poured water on it, moving it about with the hand, or rather rocking the instrument. The stones remained in the first sieve, the mineral and the light sand in the others, according to their fineness. The earth ran off with the water at the lower end. This was the machine in general use."

"But it was indispensable, I suppose," said John Mangles.

"It could be bought from diggers who had made their fortunes or been ruined, as the case might be. Or they could manage without it at a pinch."

"How?" inquired Mary Grant.

"They used a dish instead, a plain iron dish, my dear Mary, and winnowed the earth like corn, only instead of grains of wheat, they had grains of gold. The first year, many a miner became rich in this simple way. Those were good times, you see, friends, when boots were worth £6 a pair, and 10s. a glass was paid for lemonade. The first comers always get the first pick of things. Gold was everywhere in abundance on the surface of the ground, streams ran over beds of the precious metal; it was even found in the Melbourne streets; they were macadamized with gold dust. Between the 26th of January and the 24th of February, 1852, the amount of the precious metal conveyed from Mount Alexander to Melbourne by the Government escort rose to £329,550."

"About as much as the civil list of the Emperor of Russia," said Glenarvan.

"Poor man!" said the Major.

"Were there any sudden strokes of fortune?" asked Lady Helena.

"Yes, there were such, Madame."

"Can you tell us about them?" asked Glenarvan.

"Indeed I can. In 1852, in the district of Ballarat, a nugget was found weighing 573 oz.; another, in

Gippsland, that weighed 782 oz.; and in 1861, a block of 834 oz. At Ballarat, again, a miner discovered a nugget that weighed 65 kilogrammes, which, at £68 17s. 8½d. a pound, made £8954 7s. 11d. A blow of the pick which brings in £440 interest, is a good stroke certainly."

"In what proportion has the gold produced increased since the discovery of the mines?" asked John Mangles.

"Enormously, my dear John. At the beginning of the century there was only 47,000,000 annually, and at present, including the product of the mines of Europe, Asia, and America, it is reckoned at 900,000,000, say a milliard."

"Then, Monsieur Paganel," said little Robert, "in the very place where we are now at this moment, under our feet, perhaps, there is a lot of gold."

"Yes, my boy, millions. We are walking over it. We despise it, I suppose."

"This Australia is quite a privileged country, isn't it?"

"No, Robert," replied the geographer; "auriferous countries are by no means privileged. Their sons are always feeble, never strong and laborious. Look at Brazil, Mexico, California, and this Australia. Where are they in this nineteenth century of ours? The privileged country of all others, my boy, is the iron country, not the gold country."

CHAPTER XV.

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE.

ON the 2nd of January, at sunrise, the travellers quitted the gold regions, and a few hours later forded the Colban and the Caupaspe rivers. The half of their journey was now accomplished. In fifteen days more, should their journey continue to be prosperous, the little party would reach Twofold Bay.

They were all in good health. All that Paganel said of the hygienic qualities of the climate was realized. There was little or no humidity, and the heat was quite bearable. Neither horses nor bullocks could complain of it any more than human beings. The order of the march had been changed in one respect since the affair of Camden Bridge. That criminal catastrophe on the railway made Ayrton take sundry precautions, which had hitherto been unnecessary. The hunters never lost sight of the wagon, and whenever they camped, one was always placed on watch. Morning and evening the firearms were primed afresh. It was certain that a gang of ruffians was prowling about the country, and though there was no cause for actual fear, in the mean-

time it was well to be ready for whatever might happen.

It need hardly be said that these precautions were adopted without the knowledge of Lady Helena and Mary Grant, as Lord Glenarvan did not wish to alarm them.

They were by no means unnecessary, however, for any imprudence or carelessness might have cost the travellers dear. Others beside Glenarvan were on their guard. In lonely settlements and on stations, the inhabitants and the squatters prepared carefully against any attack or surprise. Houses are closed at nightfall; the dogs, let loose inside the fences, barked at the slightest sound. Not a single shepherd on horse-back gathered his numerous flocks together at close of day, without having a carbine slung from his saddle.

The outrage at Camden Bridge was the reason for all this, and many a colonist fastened himself in with bolts and bars now at dusk, who used to sleep with open doors and windows.

The Government itself displayed zeal and prudence, especially in the Post-office department. On this very day, just as Glenarvan and his party were on their way from Kilmore to Heathcoate, the mail dashed by at full speed; but though the horses were at a gallop, Glenarvan caught sight of the glittering weapons of the mounted police that rode by its side, as they swept past in a cloud of dust. One might have fancied themselves back in those lawless times when the discovery of the

first gold-fields deluged the Australian continent with the scum of Europe.

A mile beyond the road to Kilmore, the wagon, for the first time since leaving Cape Bernouilli, struck into one of those forests of gigantic trees which extend over a superficies of several degrees.

A cry of admiration escaped the travellers at the sight of the eucalyptus trees, two hundred feet high, with tough bark five inches thick. The trunks, measuring twenty feet round, and furrowed with foamy streaks of an odorous resin, rose one hundred and fifty feet above the soil. Not a branch, not a twig, not a stray shoot, not even a knot, spoilt the regularity of their outline. They could not have come out smoother from the hands of a turner. They stood like pillars all moulded exactly alike, and could be counted by hundreds. At an enormous height they spread out in chaplets of branches, rounded and adorned at their extremity with alternate leaves. At the axil of these leaves solitary flowers drooped down, the calyx of which resembles an inverted urn.

Under this leafy dome, which never lost its greenness, the air circulated freely, and dried up the dampness of the ground. Horses, cattle, and wagon could easily pass between the trees, for they were standing in wide rows, and parcelled out like a wood that was being felled. This was neither like the densely-packed woods choked up with brambles, nor the virgin forest barricaded with the trunks of fallen trees, and overgrown with inextricable tangles of creepers, where only iron



"They stood like pillars all moulded exactly alike."—P. 178.

and fire could open up a track. A grassy carpet at the foot of the trees and a canopy of verdure above, long perspectives of bold colours, little shade, little freshness at all, a peculiar light, as if the rays came through a thin veil, dappled lights and shades sharply reflected on the ground, made up a whole, and constituted a peculiar spectacle rich in novel effects. The forests of the Oceanic continent do not in the least resemble the forests of the New World; and the Eucalyptus, the "Tara" of the aborigines, belonging to the family of *Mystacea*, the different varieties of which can hardly be enumerated, is the tree *par excellence* of the Australian flora.

The reason of the shade not being deep, nor the darkness profound, under these domes of verdure, was that these trees presented a curious anomaly in the disposition of the leaves. Instead of presenting their broad surface to the sunlight, only the side is turned. Only the profile of the leaves is seen in this singular foliage. Consequently the sun's rays slant down them to the earth, as if through the open slats of a Venetian blind.

Glenarvan expressed his surprise at this circumstance, and wondered what could be the cause of it. Paganel, who was never at a loss for an answer, immediately replied,

"What astonishes me is not the caprice of nature. She knows what she is about, but botanists don't always know what they are saying. Nature made no mistake in giving this peculiar foliage to

the trees, but men have erred in calling them *eucalyptus*."

"What does the word mean?" asked Mary Grant.

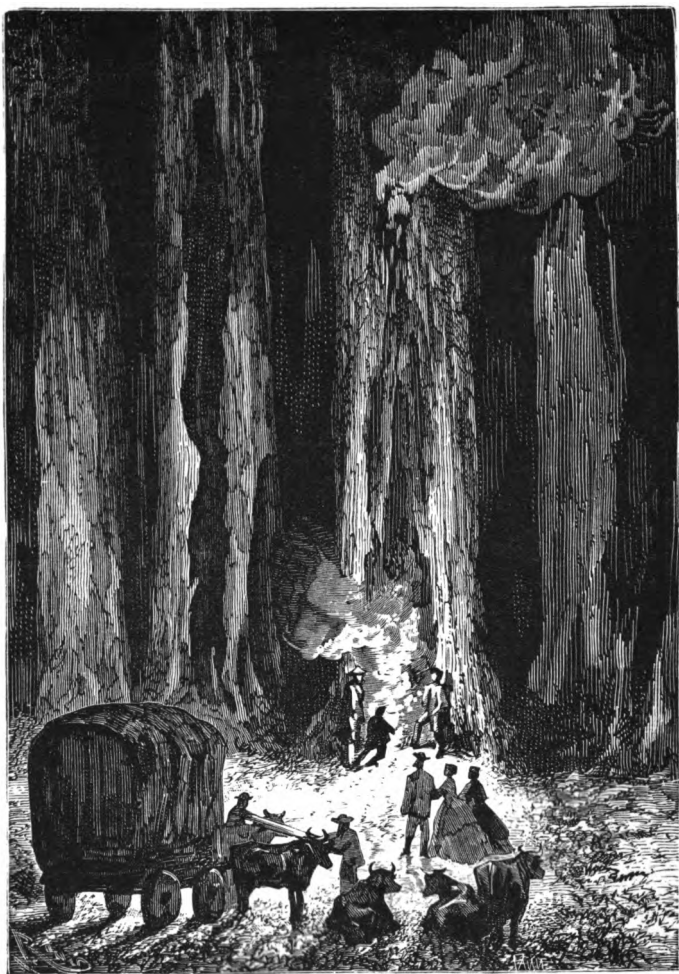
"It comes from a Greek word, meaning *I cover well*. They took care to commit the mistake in Greek, that it might not be so self-evident, for any one can see that the eucalyptus covers badly."

"I agree with you there," said Glenarvan; "but now tell us, Paganel, how it is that the leaves grow in this fashion?"

"From a purely physical cause, friends," replied Paganel, "and one that you will easily understand. In this country, where the air is dry and rain seldom falls, and the ground is parched, the trees have no need of wind or sun. Moisture lacking, sap is lacking also. Hence these narrow leaves, which seek to defend themselves against the light, and prevent too great evaporation. This is why they present the profile and not the face to the sun's rays. There is nothing more intelligent than a leaf."

"And nothing more selfish," added the Major. "These only thought of themselves, and not at all of travellers."

Every one inclined to the opinion of McNabbs except Paganel, who congratulated himself on walking under shadeless trees, though all the time he was wiping the perspiration from his forehead. However, this disposition of foliage was certainly to be regretted, for the journey through the forest was often long and



"They looked like tall factory chimneys."—P. 181.

painful, as the traveller had no protection whatever against the sun's fierce rays.

The whole of this day the wagon continued to roll along through interminable rows of eucalyptus, without meeting either quadruped or native. A few cockatoos lived in the tops of the trees, but at such a height they could scarcely be distinguished, and their noisy chatter was changed into an imperceptible murmur. Occasionally a swarm of parroquets flew along a distant path, and lighted it up for an instant with gay colours; but otherwise, solemn silence reigned in this vast green temple, and the tramp of the horses, a few words exchanged with each other by the riders, the grinding noise of the wheels, and from time to time a cry from Ayrton to stir up his lazy team, were the only sounds which disturbed this immense solitude.

When night came they camped at the foot of some eucalyptus which bore marks of a comparatively recent fire. They looked like tall factory chimneys, for the flame had completely hollowed them out their whole length. With the thick bark still covering them, they looked none the worse. However, this bad habit of squatters or natives will end in the destruction of these magnificent trees, and they will disappear like the cedars of Lebanon, those world monuments burnt by unlucky camp-fires.

Olbinett, acting on Paganel's advice, lighted his fire to prepare supper in one of these tubular trunks. He found it draw capially, and the smoke was lost in the dark foliage above. The requisite precautions were

taken for the night, and Ayrton, Mulrady, Wilson, and John Mangles undertook in turn to keep watch until sunrise.

On the 3rd of January, all day long, they came to nothing but the same symmetrical avenues of trees; it seemed as if they never were going to end. However, towards evening the ranks of trees began to thin, and on a little plain a few miles off an assemblage of regular houses.

“Seymour!” cried Paganel; “that is the last town we come to in the province of Victoria.”

“Is it an important one?” asked Lady Helena.

“It is a mere village, Madame, but on the way to become a municipality.”

“Shall we find a respectable hotel there?” asked Glenarvan.

“I hope so,” replied Paganel.

“Very well; let us get on to the town, for our fair travellers, with all their courage, will not be sorry, I fancy, to have a good night’s rest.”

“My dear Edward, Mary and I will accept it gladly, but only on the condition that it will cause no delay, or take us the least out of the road.”

“It will do neither,” replied Lord Glenarvan. “Besides, our bullocks are fatigued, and we will start to-morrow at daybreak.”

It was now nine o’clock; the moon was just beginning to rise, but her rays were only slanting yet, and lost in the mist. It was gradually getting dark when the little party entered the wide streets of

Seymour, under Paganel's guidance, who seemed always to know what he had never seen; but his instinct led him right, and he walked straight to Campbell's North British Hotel.

Horses and bullocks were taken to the stable, the wagon put up, and the travellers conducted to tolerably comfortable rooms. At ten p.m. they seated themselves round a table, of which Olbinett made a professional study. Paganel came in from rambling about the town with Robert, and gave the result of his nocturnal inspection of it in a very laconic manner. He had literally seen nothing.

And yet a man who was less *distract* would have noticed a strange stir in the streets of Seymour; groups of folks were standing here and there in constantly-increasing numbers; people were standing about their doors talking something over with grave, anxious faces; newspapers were being read aloud, commented upon, and discussed. Symptoms like these could hardly have escaped the eye of the least attentive observer; but Paganel noticed nothing.

The Major, however, without going so far, without even leaving the hotel, was soon aware of the fears which absorbed the inhabitants of the little town. Ten minutes' conversation with Dickson, the loquacious landlord, made him completely acquainted with the actual state of affairs; but he never breathed a word to anyone.

When supper was over though, and Lady Glenarvan, and Mary, and Robert had retired, the Major

detained his companions a little, and said, "They have found out the perpetrators of the crime on the Sandhurst railroad."

"And are they arrested?" asked Ayrton, eagerly.

"No," replied McNabbs, without apparently noticing the *empressment* of the quartermaster—an *empressment* which, moreover, was reasonable enough under the circumstances.

"So much the worse," replied Ayrton.

"Well," said Glenarvan, "who are the authors of the crime?"

"Read," replied the Major, offering Glenarvan a copy of the "Australian and New Zealand Gazette," "and you will see that the inspector of police was not mistaken."

Glenarvan read aloud the following passage:—

"SYDNEY, *Jan. 2*, 1866.

"It will be remembered that, on the night of the 29th or 30th of last December, there was an accident at Camden Bridge, five miles beyond the station at Castlemaine, on the railway from Melbourne to Sandhurst. The night express 11.45, dashing along at full speed, was precipitated into the Loddon River.

"Camden Bridge had been left open. The numerous robberies committed after the accident, the body of the guard picked up about half-a-mile from Camden Bridge, proved that this catastrophe was the result of a crime.

"Indeed, the coroner's inquest decided that the crime must be attributed to the band of convicts which

escaped six months ago from the Penitentiary at Perth, Western Australia, just as they were about to be transferred to Norfolk Island.*

“The gang numbers twenty-nine men; they are under the command of a certain Ben Joyce, a criminal of the most dangerous class, who arrived in Australia a few months ago, by what ship is not known, and who has hitherto succeeded in evading the hands of justice.

“The inhabitants of towns, colonists and squatters at stations, are hereby cautioned to be on their guard, and to communicate to the Surveyor-General any information that may aid his search.

“J. P. MITCHELL, S.G.”

When Glenarvan had finished reading this article, McNabbs turned to the geographer, and said,

“You see, Paganel, there can be convicts in Australia.”

“Escaped convicts, that is evident,” replied Paganel, “but not regularly transported criminals. Those fellows have no business here.”

“Well, they are here, at any rate,” said Glenarvan; “but I don’t suppose the fact need materially alter our arrangements. What do you think, John?”

John Mangles did not reply immediately; he hesitated between the sorrow it would cause the two children to give up the search, and the fear of compromising the expedition.

* Norfolk Island is on the east of Australia, where the Government kept incorrigible and daring criminals under a special system of surveillance.

"If Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant were not with us," he said, "I should not give myself much concern about these wretches."

Glenarvan understood him, and added,

"Of course, I need not say that it is not a question of giving up our task; but would it perhaps be prudent, for the sake of our companions, to rejoin the *Duncan* at Melbourne, and proceed with our search for traces of Harry Grant on the eastern side. What do you think of it, McNabbs?"

"Before I give my opinion," replied the Major, "I should like to hear Ayrton's."

At this direct appeal, the quartermaster looked at Glenarvan, and said,

"I think we are two hundred miles from Melbourne, and that the danger, if it exists, is as great on the route to the south as on the route to the east. Both are little frequented, and both will serve us. Besides, I do not think that thirty scoundrels can frighten eight well-armed, determined men. My advice, then, is to go forward."

"And good advice too, Ayrton," replied Paganel. "By going on we may come across the traces of Captain Grant. In returning south, on the contrary, we turn our backs to them. I think with you then, and I don't care a snap for these escaped fellows. A brave man wouldn't care a bit for them!"

Upon this they agreed with one voice to follow their original programme.

"Just one thing, my Lord," said Ayrton, when they were about to separate.

"Say on, Ayrton."

"Wouldn't it be advisable to send orders to the *Duncan* to be at the coast?"

"What good would that be?" replied John Maugles. "When we reach Twofold Bay it will be time enough for that. If any unexpected event should oblige us to go to Melbourne, we might be sorry not to find the *Duncan* there. Besides, her injuries cannot be repaired yet. For these reasons, then, I think it would be better to wait."

"All right," said Ayrton, and forbore to press the matter further.

Next day, the little company, armed and ready for what ever might happen, left Seymour. Half-an-hour afterwards, they entered another eucalyptus forest running east. Glenarvan would have preferred travelling over open country. A plain is less favourable for ambushes and snares than a thick wood; but they had no choice, and the wagon wended its way through the whole day between the monotonous rows of tall trees. In the evening, after going along the northern portion of the county of Anglesey, they crossed the 146th meridian, and camped on the borders of the Murray district.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

THE next day, January 3, the travellers set foot on the vast territory of the Murray. This wide, undefined district extends as far as the lofty barriers of the Australian Alps. Civilization has not yet separated it into distinct counties. It is the least known and least frequented portion of the province. Its forests will one day fall under the bushman's axe; its prairies will be given over to the squatter's sheep; but thus far it is virgin soil, desert as it was the day it rose from the Indian Ocean.

The district bears a significant name on the English map, "Reserve for the blacks." Thither the aborigines have been brutally driven by the colonists. In the inaccessible bush of these distant plains there are marked out fixed places where the aboriginal race may gradually become extinct. Any white man—colonist, emigrant, squatter, bushman—may cross the limits of these reserves; the black man alone must never leave them.

Paganel, as he rode along, descanted on the difficult subject of indigenous races. There was only one

opinion on the policy of England—namely, that her system tended to the extinction of conquered tribes, and their annihilation in the regions their ancestors inhabited. This fatal tendency is everywhere manifest, and in Australia more strikingly than elsewhere. In the early days of the colony, the convicts, and even the colonists, considered the blacks as wild animals. They hunted and shot them; they massacred them, and sought legal opinion to prove that the Australian black being outside the law of nature, murdering them was no crime. The Sydney newspapers even proposed an expeditious way of getting rid of the Hunter River tribes, nothing less than poisoning them wholesale.

The English, at the beginning of their conquests, evidently employed murder as an aid to colonization. Their cruelties were atrocious. They behaved in Australia as they did in the Indies, where five million Indians have disappeared, and as they did at the Cape, where a population of a million Hottentots has decreased to a hundred thousand. The aboriginal population consequently decimated by bad treatment and drunkenness is gradually disappearing before a homicidal civilization. Some governors, it is true, have issued decrees against sanguinary bushmen. The white man who cuts off the black man's nose and ears, or his little finger, was punished with a few lashes. Threats were in vain. Murder was organized on a vast scale, and whole tribes disappeared. To mention Van Diemen's Land alone, which numbered five million natives at the commencement of the century, in 1863

its inhabitants were reduced to seven thousand; and recently the "Mercury" announced the arrival at Hobart Town of the last Tasmanian.

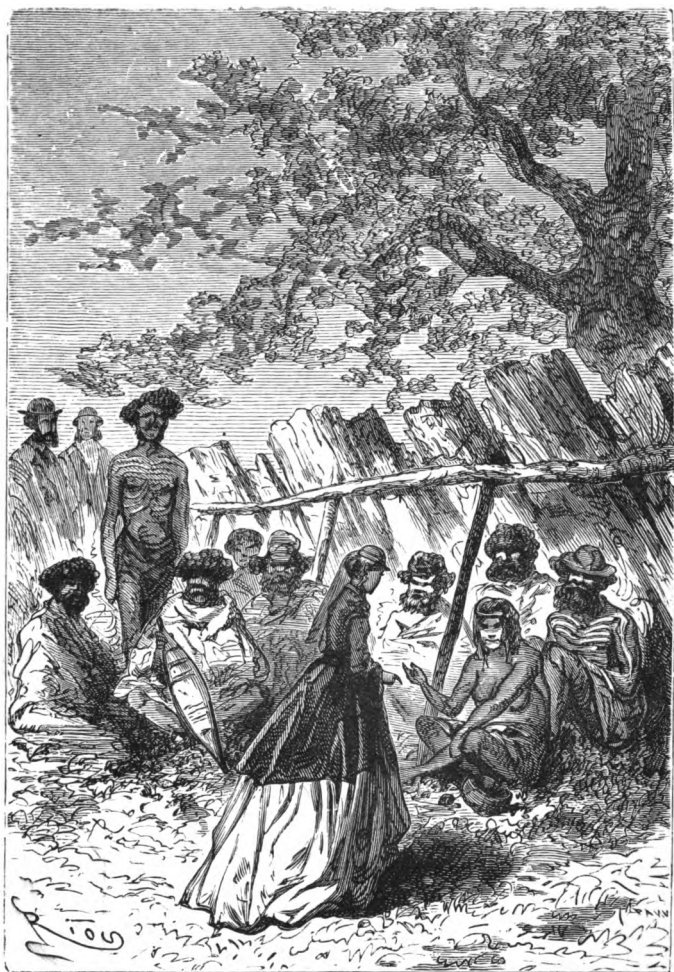
Neither Glenarvan, nor the Major, nor John Mangles contradicted Paganel. Had they even been Englishmen, they would not have defended their compatriots. The facts were patent to all, perfectly incontestable.

"Fifty years ago," added Pagnael, "we should already have met more than one tribe of natives, and up till now not a single black has come in sight. In a century this continent will be entirely depopulated.

In fact, "the reserve" appeared absolutely deserted—not a trace of camp or huts. Ruins and large woods succeeded each other, and gradually the country assumed a wild aspect. It really seemed as if not a living thing, man or beast, frequented these distant regions, when Robert, stopping suddenly before a clump of eucalyptus trees, cried out—

"A monkey! there is a monkey," and he pointed to a big black object slipping from branch to branch with wonderful agility, and passing from one tree to another as if some membraneous support were in the air. In this strange country did monkeys fly like certain foxes to whom Nature has given bats' wings?

The wagon had stopped meanwhile, and everybody's gaze was fixed on this animal, watching his gradual disappearance in the foliage at the top of the eucalyptus. Soon they saw him come down again with the rapidity of lightning, run along the ground with a thou-



"They were about thirty in number."—P. 191.

sand contortions and leaps, and then catch hold of the smooth trunk of an enormous gum-tree with his long arms. They could not understand how he could get up the upright, smooth tree, when there was nothing to catch hold of ; but the monkey, striking the trunk alternately with a sort of hatchet, made little notches, and by these supports at regular distances reached the fork of the gum-tree. In a few seconds he disappeared in the thick foliage.

“Well, I never !” cried the Major. “Whatever sort of monkey is that ?”

“That monkey,” said Paganel, “is an Australian.”

The geographer’s companions had hardly time to express their amazement, when peculiar cries were heard at a little distance, something like “coo-eeh, coo-eeh.” Ayrton goaded on his bullocks, and about a hundred paces further on the travellers came suddenly on a camp of natives.

What a sad spectacle ! About a dozen tents were pitched on the bare ground. These “gunyos,” made with strips of bark laid over like tiles, only protect the wretched occupants on one side. These poor creatures were so degraded by misery, as to be repulsive. They were about thirty in number—men, women, and children—dressed in kangaroo skins, all in rags. Their first impulse at the approach of the chariot was flight ; but a few words spoken in an unintelligible *patois* by Ayrton, reassured them. They came back with a mixture of confidence and timidity, like animals attracted by some tempting bait.

These natives were from five feet four to five feet seven in height, with dusky skins, not black, but the colour of old leather; woolly hair, long arms, distended abdomen, hairy bodies, tattooed all over, and scarred with incisions made at funeral ceremonies. Nothing was more horrible than their hideous faces, with enormous mouths, broad noses quite flat against the cheeks; projecting lower jaw, armed with white fangs. Never did human beings so closely approach the animal type.

"Robert was not mistaken," said the Major, "they are monkeys; true bloods, if you like, but still monkeys."

"McNabbs," said Lady Helena, gently, "would you side with those people, then, who hunt them down like wild beasts? The poor creatures are men."

"Men!" exclaimed McNabbs; "at best they are but intermediate beings between man and the ourang-outang. Their facial angle proves it. If I were to measure it, I should find it exactly like a monkey's."

In this particular McNabbs was right. The facial angle of an Australian aborigine is very sharp, about sixty or sixty-two degrees, equal to that of an ourang-outang. M. de Rienzi's proposal to class these poor wretches as a race apart, and to call them "pithecomorphes"—that is, men in the form of monkeys—was reasonable enough after all.

But Lady Helena was right, in a higher degree than McNabbs, in affirming that, low as these creatures were in the scale of humanity, they were possessed of

souls. Between the brute and the Australian there is the impassable gulf which separates races. Pascal justly has said that man is nowhere a brute. It is true he adds, with not less shrewdness, "neither is he an angel."

This latter clause was certainly not true, however, in the case of Lady Helena and Mary Grant. These two charitable women got out of the wagon, and held out their hands kindly to the poor creatures, offering them food, which the savages devoured with the most disgusting gluttony. They might very naturally have taken Lady Helena for some divinity, as according to their belief, the white people were formerly black, and became white after death.

But it was especially the women who excited the pity of the fair travellers. Nothing is comparable to their condition in Australia. Nature has been to them a cruel stepmother, refusing them the slightest charm. An Australian woman is a slave, carried off by brutal violence, her only nuptial present being blows of the "waddy," a sort of club which is never out of her master's hand. From that moment she is struck with premature and sudden old age, she is burdened with heavy labour incident to a wandering life, camping along with her children, rolled in a bundle of reeds, fishing and hunting gear, and a supply of *phornium tenax*, of which she makes nets. She has to find the food for her family; she hunts lizards, opossums, and serpents, going after them to the very tops of the trees. She cuts down the wood for the fires, and strips off bark

for the tent; a poor beast of burden, never knowing any rest, and only feeding on such revolting scraps as her master could not eat.

Some of these poor slaves, almost starving for food, perhaps, were trying to entice the birds with seeds.

They lay at full length on the scorching ground, motionless as if dead, waiting long hours for some unsuspecting bird to come within their reach. Their industry and skill in making snares did not go for much, and certainly only Australian birds would allow themselves to be caught by them.

The friendly advances of the travellers had so far tamed these savages that they all came round the wagon, and it was hard work to keep off their pilfering fingers. They spoke in a hissing language, and made sounds resembling the cries of animals; yet their voice had some exceedingly soft inflections. One word, "noki, noki," was repeated constantly, and the gestures which accompanied it made it intelligible enough. It was, "Give me, give me," and referred to the various small articles of property belonging to the travellers. M. Olbinett had great trouble in defending his own compartment, and especially his stores of provisions. The poor famished wretches looked threateningly at the wagon, and showed their white teeth, which had, perhaps, before now, been exercised on human flesh. Most of the Australian tribes are not anthropophagous, that is true, in time of peace, but there are few savages who would hesitate about devouring the flesh of a vanquished enemy.

However, at Lady Helena's request, Glenarvan gave orders that some food should be distributed among them. They understood his intention quickly, and gave way to such demonstrations as would have touched the most unsympathizing heart. They positively roared like wild beasts, when their keeper brings their daily meal. Without conceding that the Major was in the right, it is impossible to deny that these aborigines border closely on animals.

M. Olbinett, like a gallant man, thought it only proper to serve the women first; but these poor creatures did not dare to eat before their dreaded masters, who darted on their biscuits and dried meat like beasts of prey.

Mary Grant's eyes filled with tears at the idea of her father being in the hands of such coarse wretches as these. She pictured to herself what his sufferings must be as their slave, wandering about constantly, and exposed to misery, and hunger, and cruel treatment. John Mangles, who was watching her with great uneasiness, divined the thoughts which filled her heart, and interpreting her wishes, interrogated the quartermaster on the subject.

"Ayrton," he said, "was it from savages like these that you made your escape?"

"Yes, captain," replied Ayrton. "All the tribes of the interior resemble each other; but what you see here is a mere handful of the poor devils. On the Darling River they are in great numbers, and commanded by redoubtable chiefs.

"But what can a European do among them?" asked John Mangles.

"What I did myself," replied Ayrton. "He goes hunting and fishing with them; he takes part in their combats. As I have told you already, he is treated according to the service he can render; and if he is at all a brave, intelligent man, he takes a position of considerable importance in the tribe."

"But he is a prisoner," said Mary Grant.

"And watched, too," added Ayrton, "so closely that he cannot stir a step day or night."

"Yet you managed to escape, Ayrton," said the Major, joining in the conversation.

"Yes, Mr. McNabbs, under cover of a battle between my tribe and a neighbouring one I succeeded, and I don't regret it. But if I had to do it over again, I think I should prefer eternal slavery to the tortures I experienced in crossing the deserts of the interior. Heaven keep Captain Grant from attempting such a chance of deliverance."

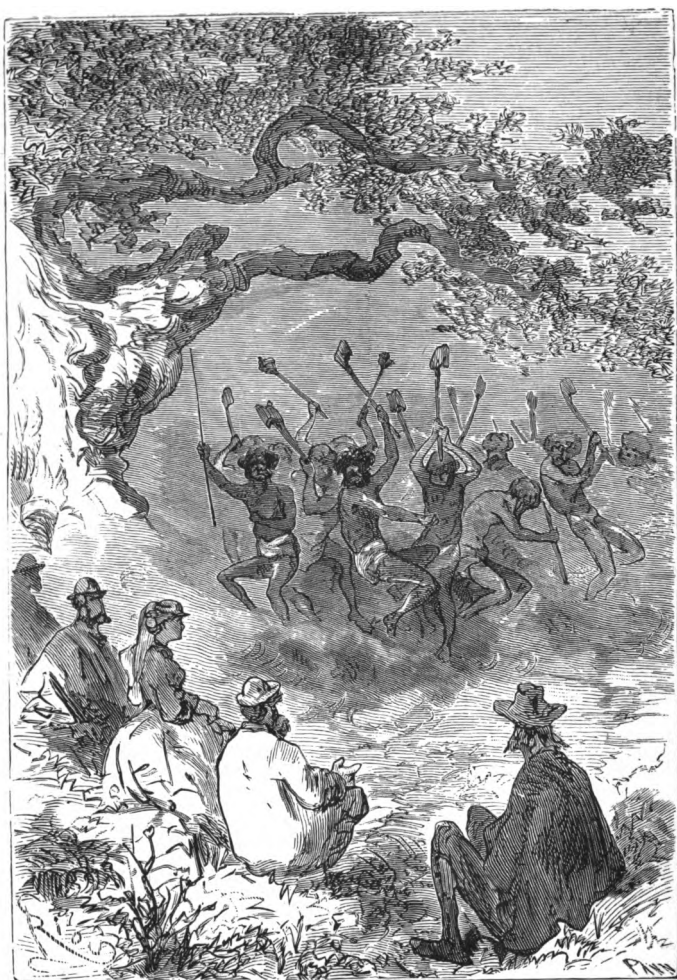
"Yes, indeed," returned John Mangles, "we ought to wish him to remain among them. It will be easier for us to trace him than if he were wandering over the forests of the continent."

"You still hope, then," said the young girl.

"I still hope to see you happy some day, Miss Mary, with God's help."

Mary could only thank the young captain with her tearful eyes.

While this conversation was going on, a sudden



"These arms were wielded by frenzied hands."—P. 197.

commotion began among the savages. They shouted vociferously, and ran about in all directions; seized their weapons, and appeared possessed with wild fury.

Glenarvan was wondering what it could all mean, when the Major, addressing Ayrton, said,

"As you have lived so long among the Australians, I suppose you understand what these fellows are saying?"

"Not quite," replied the quartermaster, "for each tribe has its own dialect. However, I think I can guess that, by way of gratitude to your Lordship, the savages are going to get up a sham fight."

He was right. Without any further preamble, the savages began attacking each other with the most perfect simulation of fury, so perfect, in fact, that any one who had not been told would have taken it for sober earnest. But the Australians are excellent mimics, travellers tell us, and on this occasion they displayed remarkable talent.

Their weapons of attack and defence consisted of a skull-cracker, a sort of wooden club, which could smash the thickest heads, and a species of "tomahawk," a very hard sharpened stone fixed between two sticks by an adhesive gum. This hatchet has a handle ten feet long; it is a formidable instrument in war and a useful one in peace; equally serviceable in cleaving branches and heads, in disembowelling bodies or trees, as the case may be.

These arms were wielded by frenzied hands, amidst the noisiest vociferations. The combatants threw

themselves on each other, and then the one would lie on the ground as if dead, and the other give a yell of triumph over the conquered foe. The women, the old ones principally, inspired by the demon of war, spurred them on to the combat, flinging themselves on the apparent corpses, and seemingly mutilating them with a ferocity which could not have been more horrible had it been real. Lady Helena was afraid every minute that the mock battle would become a fearful reality. The children, too, took part in the combat with heart and soul. Little boys and little girls especially administered famous raps with ferocious delight.

This mock fight had already lasted ten minutes, when suddenly the combatants stopped. Their weapons dropped from their hands. Profound silence succeeded the noisy tumult. The natives remained fixed in their last attitude, like actors in *tableaux vivants*. They looked petrified.

What had caused this change, and what was the secret of this sudden marble-like immobility? It was soon manifest.

A flock of cockatoos was flying over the tops of the gum-trees. They filled the air with their chatter, and the brilliant tints of their plumage made them resemble a flying rainbow. It was the apparition of this dazzling flock of birds which had interrupted the combat. The hunt, more useful than fight, followed.

One of the savages, seizing an instrument painted red, and made in a peculiar manner, left his still motionless companions, and went between the trees

and bushes towards the flock of cockatoos. He crept along noiselessly, without even rustling a leaf or displacing a pebble; it seemed like a gliding shadow. When he got to the right distance, he threw his weapon in a horizontal direction about ten feet from the ground. It flew in a straight line for about forty feet, and then suddenly, without touching the ground, rose upwards at a right angle to the height of a hundred feet, mortally wounding a dozen birds in its flight, and, after describing a parabole, fell again at the hunter's feet.

Glenarvan and his companions were stupefied; they could not believe their eyes.

"It is the boomerang," said Ayrton.

"The boomerang," cried Paganel; "the Australian boomerang!"

And he was off like a child to pick up the wonderful instrument, and see what was inside.

Certainly any one would have thought that some interior mechanism, a spring suddenly released, had altered its course; but there was nothing of the kind.

The boomerang was simply a piece of smooth, hard, bent wood, thirty or forty inches long. Its breadth in the middle was about three inches, and the two ends were sharply pointed. Its concave side made an angle of about six lines, and its convex side had the edges finely bevelled. The thing was as simple as it was inexplicable.

"And so this is the famous boomerang!" said Paganel, after a careful examination of the queer-looking weapon. "A piece of wood, neither more nor less.

How is it that, in its horizontal flight, it suddenly rises in the air, and returns to the hand that threw it? Neither *savant* nor traveller has ever solved the mystery."

"Is it not from the same cause that makes a hoop thrown in a certain fashion come back to the point of departure?" said John Mangles.

"Or is it rather," added Glenarvan, "the retrograde effect, like the rebound of a billiard-ball struck at a certain point."

"Not at all," replied Paganel. "In both these cases there is a support which determines the reaction. There is the ground for the hoop, and the cloth for the billiard-ball; but here there is no support, the weapon does not touch the ground, and yet it rises to a considerable height."

"Then how do you explain the fact, Monsieur Paganel?" asked Lady Helena.

"I do not explain it, Madame. I say so again. The effect is evidently owing to the method in which the boomerang is flung, and to its peculiar conformation; but how to throw it is still a secret known only to the natives of Australia."

"At all events, it is very ingenious for monkeys," added Lady Helena, looking at the Major, who shook his head with the air of a man still unconvinced.

However, time was passing on, and Glenarvan felt that he ought not to delay any longer. He therefore begged the ladies to resume their places in the wagon; but one of the natives came running towards them that

very moment, and pronounced several words with great animation.

"Ah," said Ayrton, "they have caught sight of cassowaries."

"Oh, is it a hunt they are going to have next?" replied Glenarvan.

"We must stop and see that," said Paganel. "It will be a curious spectacle. Perhaps the boomerang will do duty again."

"What do you say, Ayrton?"

"It won't detain us long, my Lord," replied the quartermaster.

The natives had not lost an instant. It is a stroke of good fortune for them to kill a cassowary; it secures food to the tribe for several days. The hunters consequently use their utmost skill in trying to seize such a prize; but, without guns and without dogs, how can they bring down so fleet an animal? No wonder Paganel wished to see such a novel hunt.

The emu, or cassowary, without a crest, is called "mourenk" by the aborigines, and is becoming rare on the Australian plains. This great bird, two-and-a-half feet high, has white flesh, very much like the turkey. He has on his head a horny plate; his eyes are light brown, beak black, and bent from top to bottom; the feet have three toes, armed with powerful claws; the wings, perfect stumps, are of no use to fly with; the plumage, or fur it might be called, is darker on the neck and breast. But though it cannot fly, it can run, and so swiftly, as to outdistance the fastest horse.

They can only be caught, consequently, by strategy, and singular cunning strategy too.

This explained why it was that, at the summons of the native, about a dozen of the tribe planted themselves like a detachment of sharpshooters. They were in a magnificent plain, where indigo was growing naturally, and carpeting the ground with blue flowers. The travellers had stopped on the edge of a grove of mimosas.

At the approach of the natives, half-a-dozen emus rose up and took flight, only stopping about a mile off. After reconnoitring their position, the hunter made a sign to the others to stoop. They stretched themselves flat on the ground, while he drew out of his bag two emus' skins, very cleverly sewed together, into which he crept immediately. His right arm was passed over his head, and his movements were an exact imitation of an emu looking for food. He made his way gradually towards the birds, occasionally stopping, and pretending to pick up a few grains, and sometimes making the dust fly about him in a cloud. All his manœuvres were perfectly executed. Nothing could be a more faithful reproduction of the motions of the emu. Every now and then he gave a deep croak, which might have deceived the birds themselves, as indeed it did. The savage was soon in the midst of his unsuspecting prey, and suddenly he lifted his club, and killed five or six of the emus on the spot.

The ruse had succeeded, and the chase was over.

Glenarvan and his party took leave of the natives at

once, and started onward. The savages displayed no regret at parting. Perhaps the result of the hunt had made them forget their frugal meal. They had not even "cupboard" gratitude, which is generally far stronger than that of the heart in rude, uncultured natures, and in brutes.

Yet one could not but admire the intelligence and cleverness they had displayed; and Lady Helena, turning to the Major, said,

"Now, my dear McNabbs, you are surely willing to own the Australian aborigines are not monkeys."

"Because they can imitate an animal perfectly," replied the Major. "But, on the contrary, that justifies my doctrine."

"Jesting is no answer," returned Lady Helena. "I mean to make you give up your opinion, Major."

"All right. Well, then, cousin mine: yes, or rather no. The Australians are not monkeys; it is the monkeys that are Australians."

"The idea!"

"Do you remember what the negroes declare about that interesting race, the ourang-outangs?"

"What is it?"

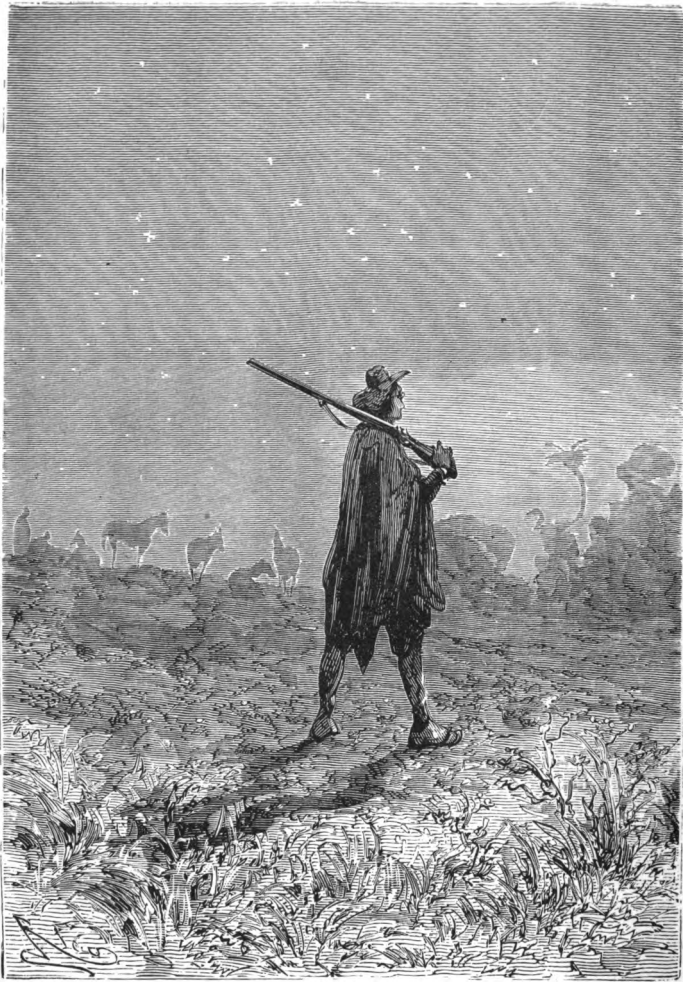
"They declare," replied the Major, "that the monkeys are blacks like themselves, but more cunning. 'He no speak because he no want to work,' said a negro of a tame ourang-outang that his master kept for amusement."

CHAPTER XVII.

SQUATTER MILLIONAIRES.

ON January 6th, at 7 a.m., after a tranquil night passed in longitude $146^{\circ} 15''$, the travellers continued their journey across the vast district. They directed their course steadily towards the rising sun, and made a straight line across the plain. Twice over they came upon the traces of squatters going towards the north, and their different footprints became confused, and Glenarvan's horse no longer left on the dust the Black-point mark, recognizable by its double shamrock.

The plain was furrowed in some places by fantastic winding creeks surrounded by box, and whose waters were rather temporary than permanent. They originated in the slopes of the Buffalo Ranges, a chain of mountains of moderate height, the undulating line of which was visible on the horizon. It was resolved to camp there the same night. Ayrton goaded on his team, and after a journey of thirty-five miles, the bullocks arrived, somewhat fatigued. The tent was pitched beneath the great trees, and as night had drawn on supper was served as quickly as possible, for all the party cared more for sleeping than eating, after such a day's march.



"Paganet walked up and down before the camp."—P. 205.

Paganel who had the first watch, did not lie down, but shouldered his rifle, and walked up and down before the camp, to keep himself from going to sleep.

In spite of the absence of the moon, the night was almost luminous with the light of the southern constellations. The *savant* amused himself with reading the great book of the firmament, a book which is always open, and full of interest to those who can read it. The profound silence of sleeping nature was only interrupted by the clanking of the hobbles on the horses' feet.

Paganel was engrossed in his astronomical meditations, and thinking more about the celestial than the terrestrial world, when a distant sound aroused him from his reverie.

He listened attentively, and to his great amaze, fancied he heard the sounds of a piano. He could not be mistaken, for he distinctly heard chords struck.

"A piano in the wilds!" said Paganel to himself. "I can never believe it is that!"

It certainly was very surprising, but Paganel found it easier to believe it was some Australian bird imitating the sounds of a Pleyel or Erard, as others do the sounds of a clock or mill.

But at this very moment, the notes of a clear, ringing voice, rose on the air. The *pianist* was accompanied by singing. Still Paganel was unwilling to be convinced. However, next minute he was forced to admit the fact, for there fell on his ear the sublime strains of Mozart's "Il mio tesoro tanto" from Don Juan.

"Well now," said the geographer to himself, "let

the Australian birds be as queer as they may, and even granting the parroquets are the most musical in the world, they can't sing Mozart!"

He listened to the sublime inspiration of the great master to the end. The effect of this soft melody on the still clear night was indescribable. Paganel remained as if spell-bound for a time; the voice ceased and all was silence.

When Wilson came to relieve the watch, he found the geographer plunged into a deep reverie. Paganel made no remark, however, to the sailor, but reserved his information for Glenarvan in the morning, and went into the tent to bed.

Next day, they were all aroused from sleep by the sudden loud barking of dogs. Glenarvan got up forthwith. Two magnificent pointers, admirable specimens of the English hunting dogs, were bounding in front of the little wood, into which they retreated at the approach of the travellers, redoubling their clamour.

"There is some station in this desert then," said Glenarvan, "and hunters too, for these are regular setters."

Paganel was just about to recount his nocturnal experiences, when two young men appeared, mounted on horses of the most perfect breed, true "hunters."

The two gentlemen, dressed in elegant hunting costume, stopped at the sight of the little group camping in gipsy fashion. They looked as if they wondered what could bring an armed party there, but when they saw the ladies get out of the wagon, they dismounted instantly, and went towards them hat in hand.

Lord Glenarvan came to meet them, and as a stranger, announced his name and rank.

The gentlemen bowed, and the elder of them said—

“My Lord, will not these ladies and yourself and friends, honour us by resting a little beneath our roof?”

“Mr.—,” began Glenarvan.

“Michael and Sandy Patterson are our names, proprietors of Hottam Station. Our house is scarcely a quarter of a mile distant.”

“Gentlemen,” replied Glenarvan, “I should not like to abuse such kindly-offered hospitality.”

“My Lord,” returned Michael Patterson, “by accepting it, you will confer a favour on poor exiles, who will be only too happy to do the honours of the wilds.”

Glenarvan bowed in token of acquiescence.

“Sir,” said Paganel, addressing Michael Patterson, “if it is not an impudent question, may I ask whether it was you that sang an air from the divine Mozart last night?”

“It was, sir,” replied the stranger, “and my cousin Sandy accompanied me.”

“Well, sir,” replied Paganel, holding out his hand to the young man, “receive the sincere compliments of a Frenchman, who is a passionate admirer of this music.”

Michael grasped his hand cordially, and then pointing out the road to take, set off accompanied by the ladies, and Lord Glenarvan and his friends, for the station. The horses were left to the care of Ayrton and the sailors.

Hottam Station was truly a magnificent establishment, kept as scrupulously in order as an English park.

Immense meadows, enclosed in grey fences, stretched away out of sight. In these thousands of bullocks and millions of sheep were grazing, tended by numerous shepherds, and still more numerous dogs. The crack of the stock-whip mingled continually with the barking of the "colliers" and the bellowing and bleating of the cattle and sheep.

Towards the east there was a boundary of myalls and gum-trees, behind which rose Mount Hottam, its imposing peak towering 7,500 feet high. Long avenues of green trees were visible on all sides. Here and there was a thick clump of "grass trees," tall bushes ten feet high, like the dwarf palm, quite lost in their crown of long narrow leaves. The air was balmy and odorous with the perfume of scented laurels, whose white blossoms, now in full bloom, distilled on the breeze the finest aromatic perfume.

To these charming groups of native trees were added transplantations from European climates. The peach, pear, and apple trees were there, the fig, the orange, and even the oak, to the rapturous delight of the travellers, who greeted them with loud hurrahs! But astonished as the travellers were to find themselves walking beneath the shadow of the trees of their own native land, they were still more so at the sight of the birds that flew about in the branches—the "satin bird," with its silky plumage, and the "king-honeysuckers," with their plumage of gold and black velvet.

For the first time, too, they saw here the "Lyre" bird, the tail of which resembles in form the graceful instrument of Orpheus. It flew about among the tree

ferns, and when its tail struck the branches, they were almost surprised not to hear the harmonious strains that inspired Amphion to rebuild the walls of Thebes. Paganel had a great desire to play on it.

However, Lord Glenarvan was not satisfied with admiring the fairy-like wonders of this oasis, improvised in the Australian desert. He was listening to the history of the young gentlemen. In England, in the midst of civilized countries, the new comer acquaints his host whence he comes and whither he is going; but here, by a refinement of delicacy, Michael and Sandy Patterson thought it a duty to make themselves known to the strangers who were about to receive their hospitality.

Michael and Sandy Patterson were the sons of London bankers. When they were twenty years of age, the head of their family said—

“Here are some thousands, young men. Go to a distant colony; and start some useful settlement there. Learn to know life by labour. If you succeed, so much the better. If you fail, it won’t matter much. We shall not regret the money which makes you men.”

The two young men obeyed. They chose the colony of Victoria in Australia, as the field for sowing the paternal bank-notes, and had no reason to repent the selection. At the end of three years the establishment was flourishing.

In Victoria, New South Wales, and Southern Australia, there are more than three thousand stations, some belonging to squatters who rear cattle, and others

to settlers who farm the ground. Till the arrival of the two Pattersons, the largest establishment of this sort was that of Mr. Jamieson, which covered an area of seventy-five miles, with a frontage of about eight miles along the Peron, one of the affluents of the Darling.

Now Hottam Station bore the palm for business and extent. The young men were both squatters and settlers. They managed their immense property with rare ability and uncommon energy.

The station was far removed from the chief towns in the midst of the unfrequented districts of the Murray. It occupied a long wide space of five leagues in extent, lying between the Buffalo Ranges and Mount Hottam. At the two angles north of this vast quadrilateral, Mount Aberdeen rose on the left, and the peaks of High Barven on the right. Winding beautiful streams were not wanting, thanks to the creeks and affluents of the Owen's River, which throws itself at the north into the bed of the Murray. Consequently they were equally successful in cattle breeding and farming. Ten thousand acres of ground, admirably cultivated, produced harvests of native productions and exotics, and several millions of animals fattened in the fertile pastures. The products of Hottam Station fetched a high price in the markets of Castlemaine and Melbourne.

Michael and Sandy Patterson had just concluded these details of their busy life, when their dwelling came in sight, at the extremity of an avenue of she-oaks.

It was a charming house, built of wood and brick, hidden in groves of *emerophilis*.

It was in the elegant form of a chalet, and a verandah,

from which Chinese lamps hung extended all along the walls like an ancient impluvium. Before the windows were coloured sun-blinds, looking like masses of flowers. Nothing could be more coquettish or exquisite, and at the same time nothing more cosy. On the lawns, and in the clumps of trees round about, were candelabras of bronze which supported elegant lanterns. At nightfall the whole of the park was lighted with jets of gas, supplied from a small gasometer, concealed beneath the myalls and tree-ferns.

Nothing at all, however, belonging to a station was visible—neither sheds, nor stables, nor cart-houses. All these out-buildings, a perfect village, comprising more than twenty huts and houses, were about a quarter of a mile off, in the heart of a little valley. Electric communication was established between this village and the masters' house, which, far removed from all noise, seemed buried in a forest of exotic trees.

Soon the avenues of casuarinas was passed through; a little iron bridge of extreme elegance, thrown across a murmuring creek, formed the entrance to the private grounds. This was speedily crossed. A fine-looking overseer came towards the travellers, the doors of the dwelling were flung open, and the hosts of Hottam Station conducted their guests into the sumptuous apartments hidden beneath the outer covering of brick and flowers.

All the luxury of artistic and fashionable life met the eye here. The ante-room, which was decorated with trophies of the turf and the chase, opened into a large drawing-room with five windows. Then a piano covered with classical and modern music; easels on

which rested pictures in process of completion ; pedestals adorned with marble statues ; pictures of Flemish masters on the walls ; rich carpets as soft to the tread as thick grass ; wall panels depicting in gay colours some charming mythological study ; an antique lustre hanging from the ceiling ; valuable porcelain ; a costly library in perfect taste, and a thousand little knick-knacks of luxury and refinement which the travellers were amazed to see in an Australian house, made a perfect picture of artistic comfort. All that could please, all that could banish the *ennui* of voluntary exile, all that could recall the remembrance of European habits, was found in this fairy-like room. One might have thought himself in some princely mansion in France or England.

The sunlight, already moderated by the shade of the verandah, streamed softly into the room through the thin fine awnings before the windows. Lady Helena was quite amazed as she went towards them. The view from this side of the house extended over a wide valley, reaching to the very feet of the mountains on the eastern side. The succession of meadows and woods, here and there vast clearings, and the graceful outlines of the hills, made a spectacle beyond all description. Not another country in the world could compare with it, not even the far-famed Valley of Paradise, in the Norwegian frontiers of Telemarck. This vast panorama, with its great patches of light and shade, was ever changing with the flickering sunbeams. Imagination could not dream of a fairer sight, one on which the eye could gaze its fill, and never weary.

At Sandy Patterson's bidding, a sumptuous breakfast was served in less than a quarter of an hour. The wines and viands were of the finest quality; but what pleased the guests most of all in the midst of these refinements of opulence, was the joy of the young squatters in offering them this splendid hospitality.

It was not long before they were told the history of the expedition, and had their liveliest interest awakened for its success. They spoke hopefully to the young Grants, and Michael said—

“Harry Grant has evidently fallen into the hands of natives, since he has not turned up at any of the settlements on the coast. He knows his position exactly, as the document proves, and the reason he did not reach some English colony is that he must have been taken prisoner by the savages the moment he landed.”

“That is precisely what befel his quartermaster, Ayrton,” said John Mangles.”

“But you, gentlemen, then, have never heard the catastrophe of the *Britannia*, mentioned?” inquired Lady Helena.

“Never, Madame,” replied Michael.

“And what treatment, in your opinion, has Captain Grant met with among the natives?”

“The Australians are not cruel, Madame,” replied the young squatter, “and Miss Grant may be easy on that score. There have been many instances of the gentleness of their nature, and some Europeans have lived a long time amongst them without having the least cause to complain of their brutality.”

"King, amongst others, the sole survivor of the Burke expedition," put in Paganel.

"And not only that bold explorer," returned Sandy, "but also an English soldier named Buckley, who deserted at Port Philip in 1803, and who was welcomed by the natives, and lived thirty-three years among them."

"And more recently," added Michael, "one of the last numbers of the '*Australasia*' informs us that a certain Morrilli has just been restored to his countrymen after sixteen years of slavery. His story is exactly similar to the captain's, for it was at the very time of his shipwreck in the *Peruvienne*, in 1846, that he was made prisoner by the natives, and dragged away into the interior of the continent. I therefore think you have reason to hope still."

The young squatter's words caused great joy to his auditors. They completely corroborated the opinions of Paganel and Ayrton.

The conversation turned on the convicts, after the ladies had left the table. The squatters had heard of the catastrophe at Camden Bridge, but felt no uneasiness about the escaped gang. It was not a station with more than a hundred men on it, that they would dare to attack. Besides, they would never go into the deserts of the Murray, where they could find no booty, nor near the colonies of New South Wales, where the roads were too well watched. Ayrton had said this too.

Glenarvan could not refuse the request of his amiable hosts, to spend the whole day at the station. It was twelve hours' delay, but also twelve hours' rest,

and both horses and bullocks would be the better for the comfortable quarters they would find there.

This was accordingly agreed upon, and the young squatters sketched out a programme of the day's amusements, which was adopted eagerly.

At noon, seven vigorous hunters were before the door. An elegant brake was intended for the ladies, in which the coachman could exhibit his skill in driving four-in-hand. The cavalcade set off preceded by huntsmen, and armed with first-rate rifles, followed by a pack of pointers barking joyously as they bounded through the bushes. For four hours the hunting party wandered through the paths and avenues of the park, which was as large as a small German state. The Reuiss-Schleitz, or Saxe-Coburg Gotha, would have gone inside it comfortably. Few people were to be met in it certainly, but sheep in abundance. As for game, there was a complete preserve awaiting the hunters. The noisy reports of guns were soon heard on all sides. Little Robert did wonders in company with Major McNabbs. The daring boy, in spite of his sister's injunctions, was always in front, and the first to fire. But John Mangles promised to watch over him, and Mary felt less uneasy.

During this *battue* they killed certain animals peculiar to the country, the very names of which were unknown to Paganel; amongst others the "wombat" and the "bandicoot." The wombat is an herbivorous animal, which burrows in the ground like a badger. It is as large as a sheep, and the flesh is excellent.

The bandicoot is a species of marsupial animal

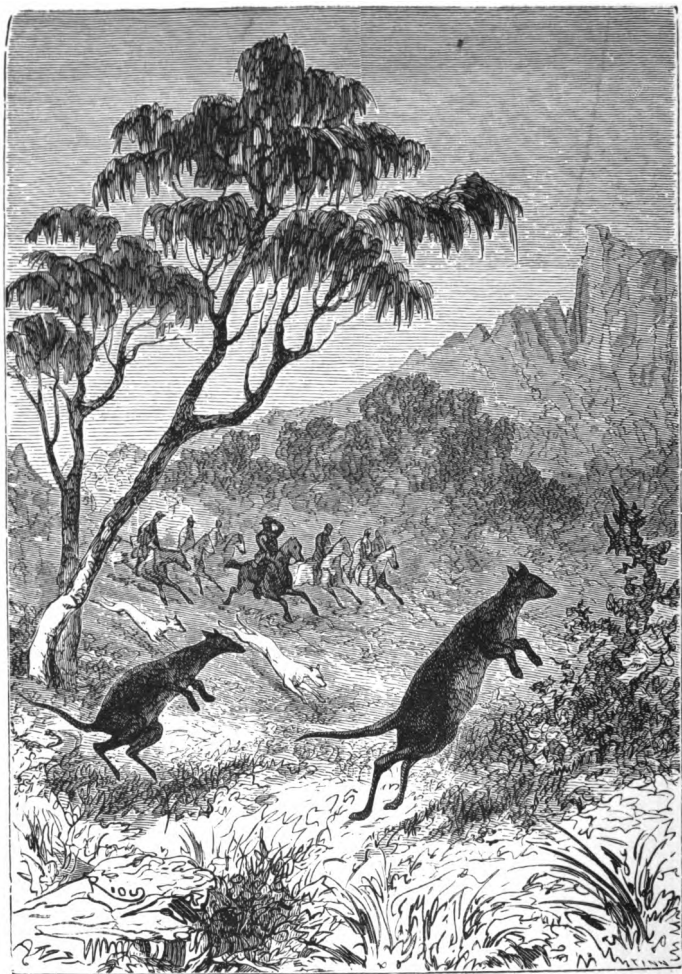
which could outwit the European fox, and give him lessons in pillaging poultry yards. It was a repulsive-looking animal, a foot and a half long, but as Paganel chanced to kill it, of course he thought it charming.

“An adorable creature,” he called it.

Robert shot, amongst other head of game, a “dasyure viverrin,” a sort of small fox, whose black fur, spotted with white, is as valuable as the marten’s; and a couple of opossums, who were hiding among the thick foliage of the large trees. But the most interesting event of the day by far was the kangaroo hunt. About four o’clock, the dogs roused a troop of these curious marsupials. The little ones retreated precipitately into the maternal pouch, and all the troop decamped in file. Nothing could be more astonishing than the enormous bounds of the kangaroo. The hind legs of the animal are twice as long as the front ones, and unbend like a spring.

At the head of the flying troop was a male five feet high, a magnificent specimen of the *macropus giganteus*, an “old man,” as the bushmen say.

For four or five miles the chase was vigorously pursued. The kangaroos showed no signs of weariness, and the dogs who had reason enough to fear their strong paws and sharp nails, did not care to approach them. But at last worn out with the race, the troop stopped, and the “old man” leaned against the trunk of a tree ready to defend himself. One of the pointers, carried away by excitement, went up to him. Next minute the unfortunate beast leaped into the air, and fell down again completely ripped up.



"The most interesting event of the day, by far, was the kangaroo hunt."—P. 217.

The whole pack, indeed, would have had little chance with these powerful marsupia. They had to dispatch the fellow with rifles. Nothing but balls could bring down the gigantic animal.

Just at this moment, Robert was well nigh the victim of his own imprudence. To make sure of his aim, he had approached too near the kangaroo, and the animal leaped upon him immediately. Robert gave a loud cry and fell. Mary Grant saw it all from the brake, and in an agony of terror, speechless and almost unable even to see, stretched out her arms towards her little brother. No one dared to fire, for fear of wounding the child.

But John Mangles opened his hunting knife, and at the risk of being ripped up himself, sprang at the animal, and plunged it into his heart. The beast dropped forward, and Robert rose unhurt. Next minute he was in his sister's arms.

"Thank you! Mr. John, thank you!" she said, holding out her hand to the young captain.

"I had pledged myself for his safety," was all John said, taking her trembling fingers in his own.

This occurrence ended the sport. The band of marsupia had disappeared after the death of their leader. The hunting-party returned home, bringing their game with them. It was then six o'clock. A magnificent dinner was ready. Among other things, there was one dish that was a great success. It was kangaroo-tail soup, prepared in the native manner.

After dessert, the guests passed into the drawing-room. The evening was devoted to music; Lady

Helena, who was a very good pianiste, put her talents at the disposal of the squatters. Michael and Sandy Patterson sang with perfect taste passages from the latest compositions of Gounod, Victor Massé, Felicien David, and even of that ill-understood genius, Richard Wagner.

At eleven, tea was brought in. It was made to perfection, as only English people can make it, but as Paganel expressed a wish to taste a true Australian brew, they brought him a beverage black as ink, made by infusing half a pound of tea in rather more than a pint of water, and letting it boil four hours. Paganel, though he made wry grimaces over it, pronounced it excellent.

At midnight the guests were conducted to cool, comfortable rooms, where they resumed in dreams the pleasures of the day.

Next morning very early, they took leave of the young squatters, with hearty thanks and a positive promise from them of a visit to Malcolm Castle when they should return to Europe.

Then the wagon began to move away, round the foot of Mount Hottam, and soon the hospitable dwelling disappeared from the sight of the travellers like some brief vision which had come and gone.

For five miles further the horses were still treading the station lands. It was not till nine o'clock that they had passed the last fence, and entered the almost unknown districts of the province of Victoria.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS.

AN immense barrier lay across the route to the south-east. It was the Australian Alps, a vast fortification, the fantastic curtain of which extended 1500 miles, and pierced the clouds at the height of 4000 feet.

The cloudy sky only allowed the heat to reach the ground through a close veil of mist. The temperature was just bearable, but the road was toilsome from its uneven character. The extumescences on the plain became more and more marked. Several mounds planted with green young gum trees appeared here and there. Further on these protuberances rising sharply, formed the first steps of the great Alps. From this time their course was a continual ascent, as was soon evident in the strain it made on the bullocks to drag along the cumbrous wagon. Their yoke creaked, they breathed heavily, and the muscles of their houghs were stretched as if they would burst. The planks of the vehicle groaned at the unexpected jolts, which Ayrton with all his skill could not prevent. The ladies bore their share of discomfort bravely.

John Mangles and his two sailors acted as scouts,

and went about a hundred steps in advance. They found out practicable paths, or passes, indeed they might be called, for these projections of the ground were like so many rocks, between which the wagon had to steer carefully. It required absolute navigation to find a safe way over the billowy region.

It was a difficult and often perilous task. Many a time Wilson's hatchet was obliged to open a passage through thick tangles of shrubs. The damp argillaceous soil gave way under their feet. The route was indefinitely prolonged owing to the insurmountable obstacles, huge blocks of granite, deep ravines, suspected lagoons, which obliged them to make a thousand detours. When night came they found they had only gone over half a degree. They camped at the foot of the Alps, on the banks of the creek of Cobongra, on the edge of a little plain, covered with little shrubs four feet high, with bright red leaves which gladdened the eye.

"We shall have hard work to get over," said Glenarvan, looking at the chain of mountains, the outlines of which were fast fading away in the deepening darkness. "The very name Alps, gives plenty of room for reflection."

"It is not quite so big as it sounds, my dear Glenarvan. Don't suppose you have a whole Switzerland to traverse. In Australia, there are the Grampians, the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Blue Mountains, as in Europe and America, but in miniature. This simply implies either that the imagination of geographers is not infinite, or that their vocabulary of proper names is very poor."

"Then these Australian Alps," said Lord Glenarvan, "are——"

"Mere pocket mountains," put in Paganel; "we shall get over them without knowing it."

"Speak for yourself," said the Major. "It would certainly take a very absent man who could cross over a chain of mountains and not know it."

"Absent! But I am not an absent man now. I appeal to the ladies. Since ever I set foot on the Australian continent, have I been once at fault? Can you reproach me with a single blunder?"

"Not one, Monsieur Paganel," said Mary Grant. "You are now the most perfect of men."

"Too perfect," added Lady Helena, laughing; "your blunders suited you admirably."

"Didn't they, Madame? If I have no faults now, I shall soon get like everybody else. I hope then I shall make some outrageous mistake before long, which will give you a good laugh. You see, unless I make mistakes, it seems to me I fail in my vocation."

Next day, the 9th of January, notwithstanding the assurances of the confident geographer, it was not without great difficulty that the little troupe made its way through the Alpine pass. They were obliged to go at a venture, and enter the depths of narrow gorges without any certainty of an outlet.

Ayrton would doubtless have found himself very much embarrassed if a little inn, a miserable public-house, had not suddenly presented itself.

"My goodness!" cried Paganel, "the landlord of

this inn won't make his fortune in a place like this. What is the use of it here?"

"To give us the information we want about the route," replied Glenarvan. "Let us go in."

Glenarvan, followed by Ayrton, entered the inn forthwith. The landlord of the "Bush Inn," as it was called, was a coarse man with an ill-tempered face, who must have considered himself his principal customer for the gin, brandy, and whiskey he had to sell. He seldom saw any one but squatters and drovers.

He answered all the questions put to him in a surly tone. But his replies sufficed to make the route clear to Ayrton, and that was all that was wanted. Glenarvan rewarded him with a handful of silver for his trouble, and was about to leave the tavern, when a placard against the wall arrested his attention.

It was a police notice, and announcing the escape of the convicts from Perth, and offering a reward for the capture of Ben Joyce, of £100 sterling.

"He's a fellow that's worth hanging, and no mistake," said Glenarvan to the quartermaster.

"And worth capturing still more. But what a sum to offer! He is not worth it!"

"I don't feel very sure of the innkeeper though, in spite of the notice," said Glenarvan.

"No more do I," replied Ayrton.

They went back to the wagon, towards the point where the route to Lucknow stopped. A narrow path wound away from this which led across the chain in a slanting direction. They had commenced the ascent.

It was hard work. More than once both the ladies

and gentlemen had to get down and walk. They were obliged to help to push round the wheels of the heavy vehicle, and to support it frequently in dangerous declivities, to unharness the bullocks when the team could not go well round sharp turnings, prop up the wagon when it threatened to roll back, and more than once Ayrton had to reinforce his bullocks by harnessing the horses, although they were tired out already with dragging themselves along.

Whether it was this prolonged fatigue, or from some other cause altogether, was not known, but one of the horses sank suddenly, without the slightest symptom of illness. It was Mulrady's horse that fell, and on attempting to pull it up, the animal was found to be dead.

Ayrton examined it immediately, but was quite at a loss to account for the disaster.

"The beast must have broken some blood-vessel," said Glenarvan.

"Evidently," replied Ayrton.

"Take my horse, Mulrady," added Glenarvan. "I will join Lady Helena in the wagon."

Mulrady obeyed, and the little party continued their fatiguing ascent, leaving the carcass of the dead animal to the ravens.

The Australian Alps are of no great thickness, and the base is not more than eight miles wide. Consequently if the pass chosen by Ayrton came out on the eastern side, they might hope to get over the high barrier within forty-eight hours more. The difficulty of the route would then be surmounted, and they would only have to get to the sea.

During the 18th the travellers reached the topmost point of the pass, about 2000 feet high. They found themselves on an open plateau, with nothing to intercept the view. Towards the north the quiet waters of Lake Omeo, all alive with aquatic birds, and beyond this lay the vast plains of the Murray. To the south were the wide-spreading plains of Gippsland, with its abundant gold-fields and tall forests. There nature was still mistress of the products and water, and great trees where the woodman's axe was as yet unknown, and the squatters, then five in number, could not struggle against her. It seemed as if this chain of the Alps separated two different countries, one of which had retained its primitive wildness. The sun went down, and a few solitary rays piercing the rosy clouds, lighted up the Murray district, leaving Gippsland in deep shadow, as if night had suddenly fallen on the whole region. The contrast was presented very vividly to the spectators placed between these two countries so divided, and some emotion filled the minds of the travellers, as they contemplated the almost unknown district they were about to traverse right to the frontiers of Victoria.

They camped on the plateau that night, and next day the descent commenced. It was tolerably rapid. A hail-storm of extreme violence assailed the travellers, and obliged them to seek a shelter among the rocks. It was not hail-stones, but regular lumps of ice, as large as one's hand, which fell from the stormy clouds. A waterspout could not have come down with more violence, and sundry big bruises warned Paganel and



"Regular lumps of ice, as large as one's hands."—P. 224.

Robert to retreat. The wagon was riddled in several places, and few coverings would have held out against those sharp icicles, some of which had fastened themselves into the trunks of the trees. It was impossible to go on till this tremendous shower was over, unless the travellers wished to be stoned. It lasted about an hour, and then the march commenced anew over slanting rocks still slippery after the hail.

Toward evening the wagon, very much shaken and disjointed in several parts, but still standing firm on its wooden disks, came down the last slopes of the Alps, among great isolated pines. The passage ended in the plains of Gippsland. The chain of the Alps was safely passed, and the usual arrangements were made for the nightly encampment.

On the 12th at daybreak, the journey was resumed with an ardour which never relaxed. Everyone was eager to reach the goal—that is to say, the Pacific Ocean—at the part where the wreck of the *Britannia* had occurred. Nothing could be done in the lonely wilds of Gippsland, and Ayrton urged Lord Glenarvan to send orders at once for the *Duncan* to repair to the coast, in order to have at hand all means of research. He thought it would certainly be advisable to take advantage of the Lucknow route to Melbourne. If they waited it would be difficult to find any way of direct communication with the capital.

This advice seemed good, and Paganel recommended that they should act upon it. He also thought that the presence of the yacht would be very useful, and he added, that if the Lucknow road was once

passed, it would be impossible to communicate with Melbourne.

Glenarvan was undecided what to do, and perhaps he would have yielded to Ayrton's arguments, if the Major had not combated this decision vigorously. He maintained that the presence of Ayrton was necessary to the expedition, that he would know the country about the coast, and that if any chance should put them on the track of Harry Grant, the quartermaster would be better able to follow it up than any one else, and, finally, that he alone could point out the exact spot where the shipwreck occurred.

McNabbs voted therefore for the continuation of the voyage, without making the least change in their programme. John Mangles was of the same opinion. The young captain said even that orders would reach the *Duncan* more easily from Twofold Bay, than if a message was sent two hundred miles over a wild country.

His counsel prevailed. It was decided that they should wait till they came to Twofold Bay. The Major watched Ayrton narrowly, and noticed his disappointed look. But he said nothing, keeping his observations, as usual, to himself.

The plains which lay at the foot of the Australian Alps were level, but slightly inclined towards the east. Great clumps of mimosas and eucalyptus, and various odorous gum-trees, broke the uniform monotony here and there. The *gastrolobium grandiflorum* covered the ground, with its bushes covered with gay flowers. Several unimportant creeks, mere streams full of little

rushes, and half covered up with orchids, often interrupted the route. They had to ford these. Flocks of bustards and emus fled at the approach of the travellers. Below the shrubs kangaroos were leaping and springing like dancing jacks. But the hunters of the party were not thinking much of the sport, and the horses little needed any additional fatigue.

Moreover, a sultry heat oppressed the plain. The atmosphere was completely saturated with electricity, and its influence was felt by men and beasts. They just dragged themselves along, and cared for nothing else. The silence was only interrupted by the cries of Ayrton urging on his burdened team.

From noon to two o'clock they went through a curious forest of ferns, which would have excited the admiration of less weary travellers. These plants in full flower measured thirty feet in height. Horses and riders passed easily beneath their drooping leaves, and sometimes the spurs would clash against the woody stems. Beneath these immoveable parasols there was a refreshing coolness which every one appreciated. Jacques Paganel, always demonstrative, gave such deep sighs of satisfaction that the parroquets and cockatoos flew out in alarm, making a deafening chorus of noisy chatter.

The geographer was going on with his sighs and jubilations with the utmost coolness, when his companions suddenly saw him reel forward, and he and his horse fell down in a lump. Was it giddiness, or worse still, suffocation, caused by the high temperature. They ran to him, exclaiming—

"Paganel ! Paganel ! what's the matter ?"

"Just this. I have no horse now !" he replied, disengaging his feet from the stirrups.

"What ! your horse ?"

"Dead like Mulrady's, as if a thunderbolt had struck him !"

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Wilson examined the animal, and found Paganel was right. His horse had been suddenly struck dead.

"This is strange," said John.

"Very strange, truly," muttered the Major.

Glenarvan was greatly disturbed by this fresh accident. He could not get a fresh horse in the desert, and if an epidemic was going to seize their steeds, they would be seriously embarrassed how to proceed.

Before the close of the day, it seemed as if the word epidemic was really going to be justified. A third horse, Wilson's, fell dead, and what was, perhaps, equally disastrous, one of the bullocks also. The means of traction and transport were now reduced to three bullocks and four horses.

The situation became grave. The unmounted horsemen might walk, of course, as many squatters had done already ; but if they abandoned the wagon, what would the ladies do ? Could they go over the one hundred and twenty miles which lay between them and Twofold Bay ?

John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan examined the surviving horses with great uneasiness, but there was not the slightest symptom of illness or even feebleness

in them. The animals were in perfect health, and bravely bearing the fatigues of the voyage. This somewhat reassured Glenarvan, and made him hope the malady would strike no more victims.

Ayrton agreed with him, but was unable to find the least solution of the mystery.

They went on again, the wagon serving, from time to time, as a house of rest for the pedestrians. In the evening, after a march of only ten miles, the signal to halt was given, and the tent pitched. The night passed without inconvenience beneath a vast mass of bushy ferns, under which enormous bats, properly called flying foxes, were flapping about.

The next day's journey was good; there were no new calamities. The health of the expedition remained satisfactory; horses and cattle did their task cheerily. Lady's Helena's drawing-room was very lively, thanks to the number of visitors. M. Olbinett busied himself in passing round refreshments, which were very acceptable in such hot weather. Half a barrel of Scotch ale was sent in bodily. Barclay and Co. was declared to be the greatest man in Great Britain, even above Wellington, who could never have manufactured such good beer. This was a Scotch estimate. Jacques Paganel drank largely, and discoursed still more *de omni re scibili*.

A day so well commenced seemed as if it could not but end well; they had gone fifteen good miles, and managed to get over a pretty hilly district where the soil was reddish. There was every reason to hope they might camp that same night on the banks of the Snowy

River, an important river which throws itself into the Pacific, south of Victoria.

Already the wheels of the wagon were making deep ruts on the wide plains, covered with blackish alluvion, as it passed on between tufts of luxuriant grass and fresh fields of gastrolobium. As evening came on, a white mist on the horizon marked the course of the Snowy River. Several additional miles were got over, and a forest of tall trees came in sight at a bend of the road, behind a gentle eminence. Ayrton turned his team a little towards the great trunks, lost in shadow, and he had got to the skirts of the wood, about half-a-mile from the river, when the wagon suddenly sunk up to the middle of the wheels.

"Stop!" he called out to the horsemen following him.

"What is wrong?" inquired Glenarvan.

"We have stuck in the mud," replied Ayrton.

He tried to stimulate the bullocks to a fresh effort by voice and goad, but the animals were buried half-way up their legs, and could not stir.

"Let us camp here," suggested John Mangles.

"It would certainly be the best place," said Ayrton.

"We shall see by daylight to-morrow how to get ourselves out."

Glenarvan acted on their advice, and came to a halt.

Night came on rapidly after a brief twilight, but the heat did not withdraw with the light. Stifling vapours filled the air, and occasionally bright flashes of lightning, the reflections of a distant storm, lighted up the sky with a fiery glare.

Arrangements were made for the night immediately. They did the best they could with the sunk wagon, and the tent was pitched beneath the shelter of the great trees ; and if the rain did not come, they had not much to complain about.

Ayrton succeeded, though with some difficulty, in extricating the three bullocks. These courageous beasts were engulfed up to the flanks. The quartermaster turned them out with the four horses, and allowed no one but himself to see after their pasturage. He always executed his task wisely, and this evening Glenarvan noticed he redoubled his care, for which he took occasion to thank him, the preservation of the team being of supreme importance.

Meantime, the travellers were dispatching a hasty supper. Fatigue and heat destroy appetite, and sleep was needed more than food. Lady Helena and Miss Grant speedily bade the company good night, and retired. Their companions soon stretched themselves under the tent or outside under the trees, which is no great hardship in this salubrious climate.

Gradually they all fell into a heavy sleep. The darkness deepened owing to a thick curtain of clouds which overspread the sky. There was not a breath of wind. The silence of night was only interrupted by the cries of the "morepork" in the minor key, like the mournful cuckoos of Europe.

Towards eleven o'clock, after a wretched, heavy, unrefreshing sleep, the Major woke. His half-closed eyes were struck with a faint light running among the great tress. It looked like a white sheet, and glittered like a

lake, and McNabbs thought at first it was the commencement of a fire.

He started up, and went towards the wood; but what was his surprise to perceive a purely natural phenomenon! Before him lay an immense bed of mushrooms, which emitted a phosphorescent light. The luminous spores of the cryptogams shone in the darkness with intensity.”*

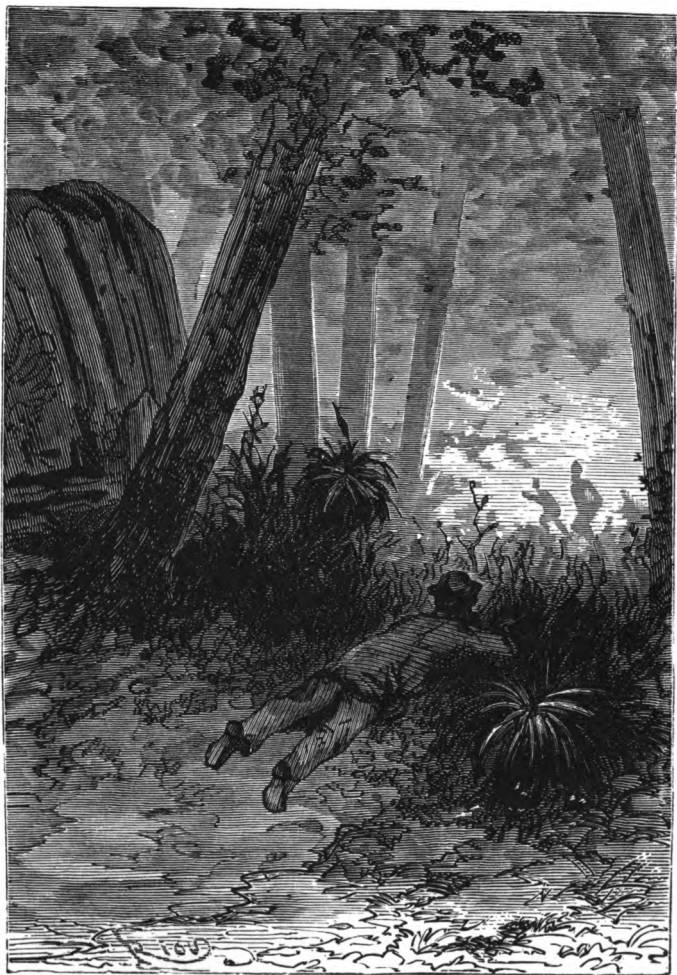
The Major, who had no selfishness about him was going to waken Paganel, that he might see this phenomenon with his own eyes when something occurred which arrested him.

This phosphorescent light illumined the wood for the distance of half-a-mile, and McNabbs fancied he saw a shadow pass across the edge of it. Were his eyes deceiving him? Was it some hallucination?

McNabbs lay down on the ground, and, after a close scrutiny, he could distinctly see several men stooping down and lifting themselves up alternately, as if they were looking on the ground for recent marks.

The Major resolved to find out what these fellows were about, and without the least hesitation or so much as arousing his companions, crept along lying flat on the ground, like a savage on the prairies, completely hidden among the long grass.

* This fact had already been mentioned by Drummond, who had noticed it in Australia in champignons belonging to the family of the *Agaricus olivarius*.



"He could distinctly see several men stooping down."—P. 232.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COUP DE THEATRE.

IT was a frightful night. At two a.m. the rain began to fall in torrents from the stormy clouds, and continued till daybreak. The tent became an insufficient shelter. Glenarvan and his companions took refuge in the wagon ; they did not sleep, but talked of one thing and another. The Major alone, whose brief absence had not been noticed, contented himself with being a silent listener. There was reason to fear that if the storm lasted longer the Snowy River would overflow its banks, which would be a very unlucky thing for the wagon, stuck fast as it was already in the soft ground. Mulrady, Ayrton, and Mangles went several times to ascertain the height of the water, and came back dripping from head to foot.

At last day appeared ; the rain ceased, but sunlight could not break through the thick clouds. Large patches of yellowish water—muddy, dirty ponds indeed they were—covered the ground. A hot steam rose from the soaking earth, and saturated the atmosphere with unhealthy humidity.

Glenarvan's first concern was the wagon ; this was the main thing in his eyes. They examined the pon-

derous vehicle, and found it sunk in the mud in a deep hollow in the stiff clay. The fore part had disappeared completely, and the hind part up to the axle. It would be a hard job to get the heavy conveyance out, and would need the united strength of men, bullocks, and horses.

“At any rate, we must make haste,” said John Mangles. “If the clay dries, it will make our task still more difficult.”

“Let us be quick, then,” replied Ayrton.

Glenarvan, his two sailors, John Mangles, and Ayrton went off at once into the wood, where the animals had passed the night. It was a gloomy-looking forest of tall gum-trees; nothing but dead trees, with wide spaces between, which had been barked for ages, or rather skinned like the cork-oak at harvest time. A miserable network of bare branches was seen above two hundred feet high in the air. Not a bird built its nest in these aerial skeletons; not a leaf trembled on the dry branches, which rattled together like bones. To what cataclysm is this phenomenon to be attributed, so frequent in Australia, entire forests struck dead by some epidemic; no one knows; neither the oldest natives, nor their ancestors who have lain long buried in the groves of the dead, have ever seen them green.

Glenarvan as he went along kept his eye fixed on the grey sky, on which the smallest branch of the gum-trees was sharply defined. Ayrton was astonished not to discover the horses and bullocks where he had left them the preceding night. They could not have wandered far with the hobbles on their legs.

They looked over the wood, but saw no signs of them, and Ayrton returned to the banks of the river, where magnificent mimosas were growing. He gave a cry well known to his team, but there was no reply. The quartermaster seemed uneasy, and his companions looked at him with disappointed faces.

An hour had passed in vain endeavours, and Glenarvan was about to go back to the wagon, when a neigh struck on his ear, and immediately after a bellow.

"They are there!" cried John Mangles, slipping between the tall branches of *gastrolobium*, which grew high enough to hide a whole flock.

Glenarvan, Mulrady, and Ayrton darted after him, and speedily shared his stupefaction at the spectacle which met their gaze.

Two bullocks and three horses lay stretched on the ground, struck down like the rest. Their bodies were already cold, and a flock of half-starved looking ravens croaking among the mimosas were watching the unexpected prey.

Glenarvan and his party gazed at each other, and Wilson could not keep back the oath that rose to his lips.

"What do you mean, Wilson?" said Glenarvan, with difficulty controlling himself. "Ayrton, bring away the bullock and the horse we have left; they will have to serve us now."

"If the wagon were not sunk in the mud," said John Mangles, "these two animals, by making short journeys, would be able to take us to the coast; so we must get the vehicle out, cost what it may."

"We will try, John," replied Glenarvan. "Let us go back now, or they will be uneasy at our long absence."

Ayrton removed the hobbles from the bullock and Mulrady from the horse, and they began to return to the encampment, following the winding margin of the river.

In half an hour they rejoined Paganel, and McNabbs, and the ladies, and told them of this fresh disaster.

"Upon my honour, Ayrton," the Major could not help saying, "it is a pity that you hadn't had the shoeing of all our beasts when we forded the Wimerra."

"Why, sir?" asked Ayrton.

"Because out of all our horses only the one your blacksmith had in his hands has escaped the common fate."

"That's true," said John Mangles. "It's strange it happens so."

"A mere chance, and nothing more," replied the quartermaster, looking firmly at the Major.

Major McNabbs bit his lips as if to keep back something he was about to say. Glenarvan and the rest waited for him to speak out his thoughts, but the Major was silent, and went up to the wagon, which Ayrton was examining.

"What was he going to say, Mangles?" asked Glenarvan.

"I don't know," replied the young captain; "but the Major is not at all a man to speak without reason."

"No, John," said Lady Helena. "McNabbs must have some suspicions about Ayrton."

"Suspicions!" exclaimed Paganel, shrugging his shoulders.

"And what can they be?" asked Glenarvan. "Does he suppose him capable of having killed our horses and bullocks? And for what purpose? Is not Ayrton's interest identical with our own?"

"You are right, dear Edward," said Lady Helena; "and what is more, the quartermaster has given us incontestable proofs of his devotion ever since the commencement of the journey."

"Certainly he has," replied Mangles; "but still, what could the Major mean? I wish he would speak his mind plainly out."

"Does he suppose him acting in concert with the convicts?" asked Paganel, imprudently.

"What convicts?" said Miss Grant.

"Monsieur Paganel is making a mistake," replied John Mangles, instantly. "He knows very well there are no convicts in the province of Victoria."

"Ah, that is true," returned Paganel, trying to get out of his unlucky speech. "Whatever had I got in my head? Convicts! who ever heard of convicts being in Australia? Besides, they would scarcely have disembarked before they would turn into good, honest men. The climate, you know, Miss Mary, the regenerative climate——"

Here the poor *savant* stuck fast, unable to get further, like the wagon in the mud. Lady Helena looked at him in surprise, which quite deprived him of his remaining *sang froid*; but seeing his embarrassment, she took Mary away to the side of the tent, where M. Olbinett was laying out an elaborate breakfast.

"I deserve to be transported myself," said Paganel, woefully.

"I think so," said Glenarvan.

And after this grave reply, which completely overwhelmed the worthy geographer, Glenarvan and John Mangles went towards the wagon.

They found Ayrton and the two sailors doing their best to get it out of the deep ruts, and the bullock and horse, yoked together, were straining every muscle. Wilson and Mulrady were pushing the wheels, and the quartermaster urging on the team with voice and goad ; but the heavy vehicle did not stir, the clay, already dry, held it as firmly as if sealed by some hydraulic cement.

John Mangles had the clay watered to loosen it, but it was of no use. After renewed vigorous efforts, men and animals stopped. Unless the vehicle was taken to pieces, it would be impossible to extricate it from the mud ; but they had no tools for the purpose, and could not attempt such a task.

However, Ayrton, who was for conquering this obstacle at all costs, was about to commence afresh, when Glenarvan stopped him by saying,

"Enough, Ayrton, enough. We must husband the strength of our remaining horse and bullock. If we are obliged to continue our journey on foot, the one animal can carry the ladies and the other the provisions. They may thus still be of great service to us."

"Very well, my Lord," replied the quartermaster, unyoking the exhausted beasts.



"The heavy vehicle did not stir."—P. 238.

"Now, friends," added Glenarvan, "let us return to the encampment and deliberately examine our situation, and determine on our course of action."

After a tolerably good breakfast to make up for their bad night, the discussion was opened, and every one of the party was asked to give his opinion.

The first point was to ascertain their exact position, and this was referred to Paganel, who informed them, with his accustomed rigorous accuracy, that the expedition had been stopped on the 37th parallel, in longitude $147^{\circ} 53'$, on the banks of the Snowy River.

"What is the exact longitude of Twofold Bay?" asked Glenarvan.

"One hundred and fifty degrees," replied Paganel; " $2^{\circ} 7'$ distant from this, and that is equal to seventy-five miles."

"And Melbourne is?"

"Two hundred miles off at least."

"Very good. Our position being then settled, what is best to do?"

The response was unanimous to get to the coast without delay. Lady Helena and Mary Grant undertook to go five miles a-day. The courageous ladies did not shrink, if necessary, from walking the whole distance between the Snowy River and Twofold Bay.

"You are a brave travelling companion, dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "But are we sure of finding at the bay all we want when we get there?"

"Without the least doubt?" replied Paganel. "Eden is a municipality which already numbers many years of existence; its port must have frequent communication

with Melbourne. I suppose even at Delegeate, on the Victoria frontier, thirty-five miles from here, we might re-victual our expedition, and find fresh means of transport."

"And the *Duncan*?" asked Ayrton. "Don't you think it advisable to send for her to come to the bay?"

"What do you think, John?" said Glenarvan.

"I don't think your Lordship should be in any hurry about it," replied the young captain, after brief reflection. "There will be time enough to give orders to Tom Austin, and summon him to the coast."

"That's quite certain," added Paganel.

"You see," said John, "in four or five days we shall reach Eden."

"Four or five days!" repeated Ayrton, shaking his head; "say fifteen or twenty, captain, if you don't want to repent your mistake when it is too late."

"Fifteen or twenty days to go seventy-five miles?" cried Glenarvan.

"At the least, my Lord. You are going to traverse the most difficult portion of Victoria, a desert, where everything is wanting, the squatters say; plains covered with scrub, where is no beaten track and no stations. You will have to walk hatchet or torch in hand, and, believe me, that's not quick work."

Ayrton had spoken in a firm tone, and Paganel, at whom all the others looked inquiringly, nodded his head in token of his agreement in opinion with the quartermaster.

But John Mangles said, "Well, admitting these difficulties, in fifteen days at most your Lordship can send orders to the *Duncan*."

"I have to add," said Ayrton, "that the principal difficulties are not the obstacles in the road, but the Snowy River has to be crossed, and most probably we must wait till the water goes down."

"Wait!" cried John. "Is there no ford?"

"I think not," replied Ayrton. "This morning I was looking for some practicable crossing, but could not find any. It is unusual to meet with such a tumultuous river at this time of the year, and it is a fatality against which I am powerless."

"Is this Snowy River wide?" asked Lady Helena.

"Wide and deep, Madame," replied Ayrton; "a mile wide, with an impetuous current. A good swimmer could not go over without danger."

"Let us build a boat then," said Robert, who never stuck at anything. "We have only to cut down a tree and hollow it out, and get in and be off."

"He's going ahead, this boy of Captain Grant's!" said Paganel.

"And he's right," returned John Mangles. "We shall be forced to come to that, and I think it is useless to waste our time in idle discussions."

"What do you think of it, Ayrton?" asked Glenarvan.

"I think, my Lord, that a month hence, unless some help arrives, we shall find ourselves still on the banks of the Snowy."

"Well, then, have you any better plan to propose?" said John Mangles, somewhat impatiently.

"Yes, that the *Duncan* should leave Melbourne, and go to the east coast."

"Oh, always the same story! And how could her presence at the bay facilitate our means of getting there?"

Ayrton waited an instant before answering, and then said, rather evasively—

"I have no wish to obtrude my opinions. What I do is for our common good, and I am ready to start the moment his Honour gives the signal." And he crossed his arms and was silent.

"That is no reply, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Tell us your plan, and we will discuss it. What is it you propose?"

Ayrton replied, in a calm tone of assurance—

"I propose that we should not venture beyond the Snowy in our present condition. It is here we must wait till help comes, and this help can only come from the *Duncan*. Let us camp here, where we have provisions, and let one of us take your orders to Tom Austin to go on to Twofold Bay."

This unexpected proposition was greeted with astonishment, and by John Mangles with openly-expressed opposition.

"Meantime," continued Ayrton, "either the river will get lower and allow us to ford it, or we shall have time to make a canoe. This is the plan I submit for your Lordship's approval."

"Well, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan, "your plan is worthy of serious consideration. The worst thing about it is the delay it would cause; but it would save us great fatigue, and perhaps danger. What do you think of it, friends?"

"Speak your mind, McNabbs," said Lady Helena. "Since the beginning of the discussion you have been only a listener, and very sparing of your words."

"Since you ask my advice," said the Major, "I will give it you frankly. I think Ayrton has spoken wisely and well, and I side with him."

Such a reply was hardly looked for, as hitherto the Major had been strongly opposed to Ayrton's project. Ayrton himself was surprised, and gave a hasty glance at the Major. However, Paganel, Lady Helena, and the sailors were all of the same way of thinking; and since McNabbs had come over to his opinion, Glenarvan decided that the quartermaster's plan should be adopted in principle.

"And now, John," he added, "don't you think yourself it would be prudent to encamp here, on the banks of the river Snowy, till we can get some means of conveyance."

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "if our messenger can get across the Snowy when we cannot."

All eyes were turned on the quartermaster, who said, with the air of a man who knew what he was about—

"The messenger will not cross the river."

"Indeed!" said John Mangles.

"He will simply go back to the Lucknow Road, which leads straight to Melbourne."

"Go two hundred and fifty miles on foot!" cried the young captain.

"On horseback," replied Ayrton. "There is one horse sound enough at present; it will only be an affair of four days. Allow the *Duncan* two days more to get

to the bay and twenty hours to get back to the camp, and in a week the messenger can be back with the crew of the vessel."

The Major nodded approvingly, as Ayrton spoke, to the profound astonishment of John Mangles ; but as every one was in favour of the plan, all there was to do was to carry it out as quickly as possible.

"Now then, friends," said Glenarvan, "we must settle who is to be our messenger. It will be a fatiguing, perilous mission. I would not conceal the fact from you. Who is disposed, then, to sacrifice himself for his companions, and carry our instructions to Melbourne?"

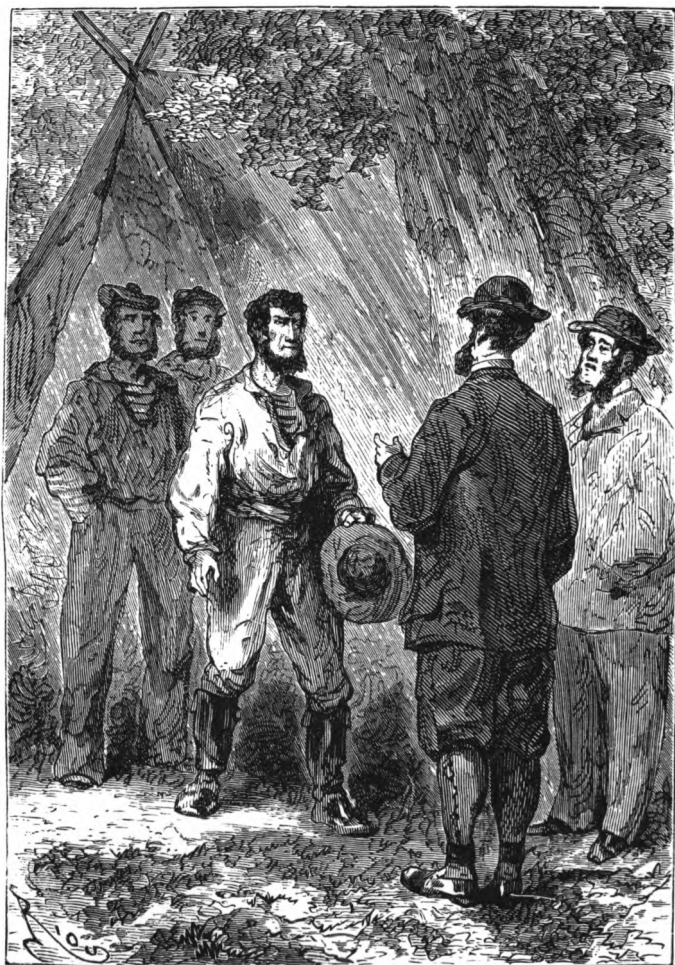
Wilson and Mulrady, and also Paganel, John Mangles, and Robert, instantly offered their services. John particularly insisted that he should be entrusted with the business ; but Ayrton, who had been silent till that moment, now said—

"With your Honour's permission, I will go myself. I am accustomed to all the country round. Many a time I have been across worse parts. I can go through where another would stick. I ask, then, for the good of all, that I may be sent to Melbourne. A word from you will accredit me with your chief officer, and in six days I guarantee the *Duncan* shall be in Twofold Bay."

"That's well spoken," replied Glenarvan. "You are a clever, daring fellow, and you will succeed."

It was quite evident the quartermaster was the fittest man for the mission. All the rest withdrew from the competition.

John Mangles made this one last objection, that the presence of Ayrton was necessary to discover traces of



"'With your Honour's permission, I will go myself.'"—P. 244.

the *Britannia* or Harry Grant. But the Major justly observed that the expedition would remain on the banks of the Snowy till the return of Ayrton, that they had no idea of resuming their search without him, and that consequently his absence would not in the least prejudice the captain's interests.

"Well, go, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Be as quick as you can, and come back by Eden to our camp."

A gleam of satisfaction shot across the quartermaster's face. He turned away his head, but not before John Mangles had caught the look, and instinctively felt his old distrust of Ayrton revive.

The quartermaster made immediate preparations for departure, assisted by the two sailors, one of whom saw to the horse and the other to the provisions. Glenarvan, meantime, wrote his letter for Tom Austin. He ordered his chief officer to repair without delay to Twofold Bay. He introduced the quartermaster to him as a man worthy of all confidence. On arriving at the coast, Tom was to despatch a detachment of sailors from the yacht under his orders.

Glenarvan was just at this part of his letter, when McNabbs, who was following him with his eyes, asked him in a singular tone how he wrote Ayrton's name.

"Why, as it is pronounced, of course," replied Glenarvan.

"It is a mistake," replied the Major quietly. "He pronounces it *Ayrton*, but he writes it *Ben Joyce*!"

CHAPTER XX.

ALAND ZEALAND.

THE revelation of Tom Ayrton's name was like a clap of thunder. Ayrton had started up quickly and grasped his revolver. A report was heard, and Glenarvan fell wounded by a ball. Gunshots resounded at the same time outside.

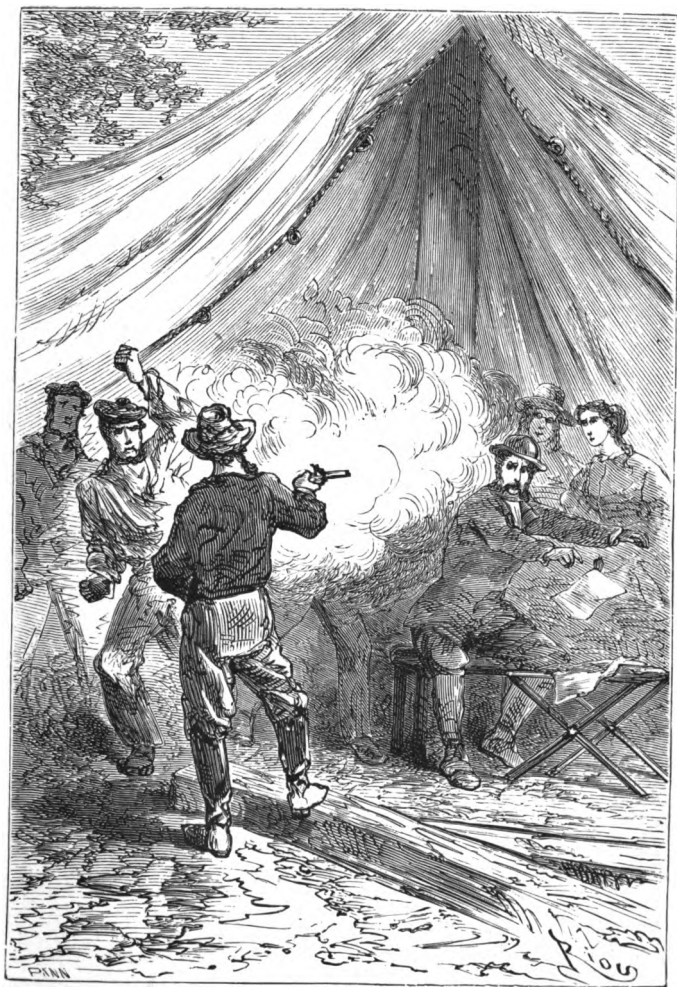
John Mangles and the sailors, after this first surprise, would have seized Ben Joyce; but the bold convict had already disappeared, and rejoined his gang scattered among the gum-trees.

The tent was no shelter against the balls; it was necessary to beat a retreat. Glenarvan was slightly wounded, but could stand up.

"To the wagon—to the wagon!" cried John Mangles, dragging Lady Helena and Mary Grant along, who were soon in safety behind the thick curtains.

John and the Major, and Paganel and the sailors, seized their carbines in readiness to repulse the convicts. Glenarvan and Robert went in beside the ladies, while Olbinett rushed to the common defence.

These events occurred with the rapidity of lightning.



"A report was heard, and Glenawan fell wounded."—P. 246.

John Mangles watched the skirts of the wood attentively. The reports had ceased suddenly on the arrival of Ben Joyce; profound silence had succeeded the noisy fusilade. A few wreaths of white smoke were still curling over the tops of the gum-trees. The tall tufts of gastrolobium were motionless. All signs of attack had disappeared.

The Major and John Mangles examined the wood closely as far as the great trees; the place was abandoned. Numerous footmarks were there, and several half-burnt caps were lying smoking on the ground. The Major, like a prudent man, extinguished these carefully, for a spark would be enough to kindle a tremendous conflagration in this forest of dry trees.

"The convicts have disappeared!" said John Mangles.

"Yes," replied the Major, "and the disappearance of them makes me uneasy. I prefer seeing them face to face. Better meet a tiger on the plain than a serpent in the grass. Let us beat the bushes all round the wagon."

The Major and John hunted all round the country, but there was not a convict to be seen from the edge of the wood right down to the river. Ben Joyce and his gang seemed to have flown away like a flock of marauding birds; it was too sudden a disappearance to let the travellers feel perfectly safe, consequently they resolved to keep a sharp look out. The wagon, a regular fortress buried in mud, was made the centre of the camp, and two men mounted guard round it, who were relieved hour by hour.

The first care of Lady Helena and Mary was to dress Glenarvan's wound. Lady Helena rushed towards him in terror, as he fell down struck by Ben Joyce's ball. Controlling her agony, the courageous woman helped her husband into the wagon. Then his shoulder was bared, and the Major found, on examination, that the ball had only gone into the flesh, and there was no internal lesion. Neither bone nor muscle appeared to be injured. The wound bled profusely, but Glenarvan could use his fingers and forearm, and consequently there was no occasion for any uneasiness about the issue. As soon as his shoulder was dressed, he would not allow any more fuss to be made about himself, but at once entered on the business in hand.

All the party, except Mulrady and Wilson, who were on guard, were brought into the wagon, and the Major was asked to explain how this *dénouement* had come about.

Before commencing his recital he told Lady Helena about the escape of the convicts at Perth, and their appearance in Victoria ; as also their complicity in the railway catastrophe. He handed her the "Australian and New Zealand Gazette" they had bought in Seymour, and added that a reward had been offered by the police for the apprehension of Ben Joyce, a redoubtable bandit, who had become a noted character, during the last eighteen months, for doing deeds of villany and crime.

But how had McNabbs found out that Ayrton and Ben Joyce were one and the same individual. This was the mystery to be unravelled, and the Major soon explained it.

Ever since their first meeting, McNabbs had felt an instinctive distrust of the quartermaster. Two or three insignificant facts, a hasty glance exchanged between him and the blacksmith at the Wimmera River, his unwillingness to cross towns and villages, his persistence about getting the *Duncan* summoned to the coast, the strange death of the animals entrusted to his care, and, lastly, a want of frankness in all his behaviour—all these details combined had awakened the Major's suspicions.

However, he could not have brought any direct accusation against him till the events of the preceding evening had occurred.

McNabbs, slipping between the tall shrubs, got within reach of the suspicious shadows he had noticed about half a mile away from the encampment. The phosphorescent furze emitted a faint light, by which he could discern three men examining marks on the ground, and one of the three was the blacksmith of Black Point.

“‘It is them!’ said one of the men. ‘Yes,’ replied another, ‘there is the trefoil on the mark of the horse-shoe. It has been like that since the Wimmera.’—‘All the horses are dead.’—‘The poison is not far off.’—‘There is enough to kill a regiment of cavalry.’—‘A useful plant this gastrolobium!’

“I heard them say this to each other, and then they were quite silent; but I did not know enough yet, so I followed them. Soon the conversation began again. ‘He is a clever fellow, this Ben Joyce,’ said the blacksmith. ‘A capital quartermaster, with his invention

of shipwreck.'—'If his project succeeds, it will be a stroke of fortune.'—'He is a very devil is this Ayrton.'—'Call him Ben Joyce, for he has well earned his name!' And then the scoundrels left the forest. I had all the information I wanted now, and came back to the camp quite convinced, begging Paganel's pardon, that Australia does not reform criminals."

This was all the Major's story, and his companions sat silently thinking over it.

"Then Ayrton has dragged us here," said Glenarvan, pale with anger, "on purpose to rob and assassinate us."

"For nothing else," replied the Major; "and ever since we left the Wimmera his gang has been on our track and spying us, waiting for a favourable opportunity."

"Yes."

"Then the wretch was never one of the sailors on the *Britannia*; he had stolen the name of Ayrton and the shipping papers."

They were all looking at McNabbs for an answer, for he must have put this question to himself already.

"There is no great certainty about the matter," he replied, in his usual calm voice; "but in my opinion the man's name is really Ayrton. Ben Joyce is his *nom de guerre*. It is an incontestable fact that he knew Harry Grant, and also that he was quartermaster on the *Britannia*. These facts were proved by the minute details given us by Ayrton, and are corroborated by the conversation between the convicts, which I repeated to you. We need not loose ourselves in vain

conjectures, but consider it as certain that Ben Joyce is Ayrton, and that Ayrton is Ben Joyce; that is to say, one of the crew of the *Britannia* has turned leader of the convict gang."

The explanations of McNabbs were accepted without discussion.

"Now then," said Glenarvan, "will you tell us how and why Harry Grant's quartermaster comes to be in Australia?"

"How, I don't know," replied McNabbs; "and the police declare they are as ignorant on the subject as myself. Why, it is impossible to say; that is a mystery which the future may explain."

"The police are not even aware of Ayrton's identity with Ben Joyce," said John Mangles.

"You are right, John," replied the Major, "and this circumstance would throw light on their search."

"Then I suppose," said Lady Helena, "the wicked wretch had got work on Paddy O'Moore's farm with a criminal intent?"

"There is not the least doubt of it. He was planning some evil design against the Irishman, when a better chance presented itself. Chance led us into his presence. He heard Paganel's story and all about the shipwreck, and the audacious fellow determined to act his part immediately. The expedition was decided on. At the Wimmera he found means of communicating with one of his gang, the blacksmith of Black Point, and left traces of our journey which might be easily recognized. The gang followed us. A poisonous plant enabled them gradually to kill our

bullocks and horses. At the right moment he sunk us in the marshes of the Snowy, and gave us into the hands of his gang."

Such was the history of Ben Joyce. The Major had shown him up in his true character—a bold and formidable criminal. His manifestly evil designs called for the utmost vigilance on the part of Glenarvan. Happily the unmasked bandit was less to be feared than the traitor.

But one serious consequence must come out of this revelation; no one had thought of it yet except Mary Grant. John Mangles was the first to notice her pale, despairing face; he understood what was passing in her mind at a glance.

"Miss Mary! Miss Mary!" he cried; "you are crying!"

"Crying, my child?" said Lady Helena.

"My father, Madame, my father!" replied the poor girl.

She could say no more, but the truth flashed on every mind. They all knew the cause of her grief, and why tears fell from her eyes and her father's name came to her lips.

The discovery of Ayrton's treachery had destroyed all hope; the convict had invented a shipwreck to entrap Glenarvan. In the conversation overheard by McNabbs, the convicts had plainly said that the *Britannia* had never been wrecked on the rocks in Twofold Bay. Harry Grant had never set foot on the Australian continent!

A second time they had been sent on a wrong

track by an erroneous interpretation of the document. Gloomy silence fell on the whole party at the sight of the children's sorrow, and no one could find a cheering word to say. Robert was crying in his sister's arms. Paganel muttered in a tone of vexation,

"That unlucky document! It may boast of having half-crazed a dozen peoples' wits!"

And the worthy geographer was in such a rage with himself, that he struck his forehead as if he would smash it in.

Glenarvan went out to Mulrady and Wilson, who were keeping watch. Profound silence reigned over the plain between the wood and the river. Ben Joyce and his band must be at a considerable distance, for the atmosphere was in such a state of complete torpor that the slightest sound would have been heard. It was evident, from the flocks of birds on the lower branches of the trees, and the kangaroos feeding quietly on the young shoots, and a couple of eurus whose confiding heads passed between the great clumps of bushes, that those peaceful solitudes were untroubled by the presence of human beings.

"You have neither seen nor heard anything for the last hour?" said Glenarvan to the two sailors.

"Nothing whatever, your honour," replied Wilson. "The convicts must be miles away from here."

"They were not in numbers enough to attack us, I suppose," added Mulrady. "Ben Joyce will have gone to recruit his party, with some bandits like himself, among the bushrangers lurking about the foot of the Alps."

"That is probably the case, Mulrady," replied Glenarvan. "The rascals are cowards ; they know we are armed, and well armed too. Perhaps they are waiting for nightfall to commence their attack. We must redouble our watchfulness. Oh, if we could only get out of this bog, and down to the coast ; but this swollen river bars our passage. I would pay its weight in gold for a raft which would carry us over to the other side."

"Why does not your honour give orders for a raft to be constructed ? We have plenty of wood."

"No, Wilson," replied Glenarvan ; "this Snowy is not a river, it is an impassable torrent."

John Mangles, the Major, and Paganel just then came out of the wagon on purpose to examine the state of the river. They found it still so swollen by the heavy rain that the water was a foot above the level. It formed an impetuous current, like the American rapids. To venture over that foaming current and that rushing flood, broken into a thousand eddies and hollows and gulfs, was impossible.

John Mangles declared the passage impracticable.

"But we must not stay here," he added, "without attempting anything. What we were going to do before Ayrton's treachery is still more necessary now."

"What do you mean, John ? " asked Glenarvan.

"I mean that our need is urgent, and that since we cannot go to Twofold Bay, we must go to Melbourne. We have still one horse. Give it to me, my Lord, and I will go to Melbourne."

"But that will be a dangerous venture, John," said

Glenarvan. "Not to speak of the perils of a journey of two hundred miles over an unknown country, the road and the byeways will be guarded by the accomplices of Ben Joyce."

"I know it, my Lord, but I know also that things can't stay long as they are ; Ayrton only asked a week's absence to fetch the crew of the *Duncan*, and I will be back to the Snowy River in six days. Well, my Lord, what are your commands ?"

"Before Glenarvan decides," said Paganel, "I must make an observation. That someone must go to Melbourne is evident, but that John Mangles should be the one to expose himself to the risk, cannot be. He is the captain of the *Duncan*, and must be careful of his life. I will go instead."

"That is all very well, Paganel," said the Major ; "but why should you be the one to go ?"

"Are not we here ?" said Mulrady and Wilson.

"And do you think," replied McNabbs, "that a journey of two hundred miles on horseback frightens me."

"Friends," said Glenarvan, "one of us must go, so let it be decided by drawing lots. Write all our names, Paganel."

"Not yours, my Lord," said John Mangles.

"And why not ?"

"What ! separate you from Lady Helena, and before your wound is healed too !"

"Glenarvan," said Paganel, "you cannot leave the expedition."

"No," added the Major. "Your place is here, Edward, you ought not to go."

"Danger is involved in it," said Glenarvan, "and I will take my share along with the rest. Write the names, Paganel, and put mine among them, and I hope the lot may fall on me."

His will was obeyed. The names were written, and the lots drawn. Fate fixed on Mulrady. The brave sailor shouted hurrah ! and said—

"My Lord, I am ready to start." Glenarvan pressed his hand, and then went back to the wagon, leaving John Mangles and the Major on watch.

Lady Helena was informed of the determination to send a message to Melbourne, and that they had drawn lots who should go, and Mulrady had been chosen. Lady Helena said a few kind words to the brave sailor, which went straight to his heart. Fate could hardly have chosen a better man, for he was not only brave and intelligent, but robust and superior to all fatigue.

Mulrady's departure was fixed for eight o'clock, immediately after the short twilight. Wilson undertook to get the horse ready. He had a project in his head of changing the horse's left shoe, for one off the horses that had died in the night. This would prevent the convicts from tracking Mulrady, or following him, as they were not mounted.

While Wilson was arranging this, Glenarvan got his letter ready for Tom Austin, but his wounded arm troubled him, and he asked Paganel to write it for him. The *savant* was so absorbed in one fixed idea that he seemed hardly to know what he was about. In all this succession of vexations, it must be said the document was always uppermost in Paganel's mind. He was

always worrying himself about the wrong interpretation of it, and going over and over each word, trying to discover some new meaning, and losing himself in perplexities.

He did not hear Glenarvan when he first spoke, but on the request being made a second time, said—

“Ah, very well, I’m ready.”

While he spoke he was mechanically getting paper from his note-book. He tore a blank page off, and sat down pencil in hand to write. Glenarvan began to dictate as follows—

“Order to Tom Austin, Chief Officer, to get to sea without delay, and bring the *Duncan* to——”

Paganel was just finishing the last word, when his eye chanced to fall on the “Australian and New Zealand Gazette” lying on the ground. The paper was so folded that only the last two syllables of the title were visible. Paganel’s pencil stopped, and he seemed to become oblivious of Glenarvan and the letter entirely, till his friend called out—

“Come, Paganel!”

“Ah!” said the geographer, with a loud exclamation.

“What is the matter?” asked the Major

“Nothing, nothing,” replied Paganel. Then he muttered to himself, “*Aland! aland! aland!*”

He had got up and seized the newspaper. He shook it, in his efforts to keep back the words that rose to his lips.

Lady Helena, Mary, Robert, and Glenarvan gazed at him in astonishment, at a loss to understand this

unaccountable agitation. Paganel looked as if a sudden fit of insanity had come over him. But his excitement did not last. He became by degrees calmer. The gleam of joy that shone in his eyes died away. He sat down again, and said quietly—

“When you please, my Lord, I am ready.” Glenarvan resumed his dictation at once, and the letter was soon completed. It read as follows:—

“Order to Tom Austin to go to sea without delay ; and take the *Duncan* to Melbourne by the 37° of latitude to the eastern coast of Australia.”

“Of Australia?” said Paganel. “Ah yes! of Australia.”

Then he finished the letter, and gave it to Glenarvan to sign, who went through the necessary formality as well as he could, and closed and sealed the letter. Paganel, whose hand still trembled with emotion, directed it thus:—

“TOM AUSTIN,
“Chief Officer on Board the Yacht *Duncan*,
“MELBOURNE.”

Then he got up and went out of the wagon, gesticulating and repeating the incomprehensible words—

“*Aland ! aland ! aland !*”

CHAPTER XXI.

FOUR DAYS OF ANXIETY.

THE rest of the day passed on without any further incident. All the preparations for Mulrady's journey were completed, and the brave sailor rejoiced in being able to give his Lordship this proof of devotion.

Paganel had recovered his usual *sang froid* and manners. His look, indeed, betrayed his pre-occupation, but he seemed resolved to keep it secret. No doubt he had strong reasons for this course of action, for the Major heard him repeating, like a man struggling with himself—

“No, no, they would not believe it; and, besides, what good would it be? It is too late!”

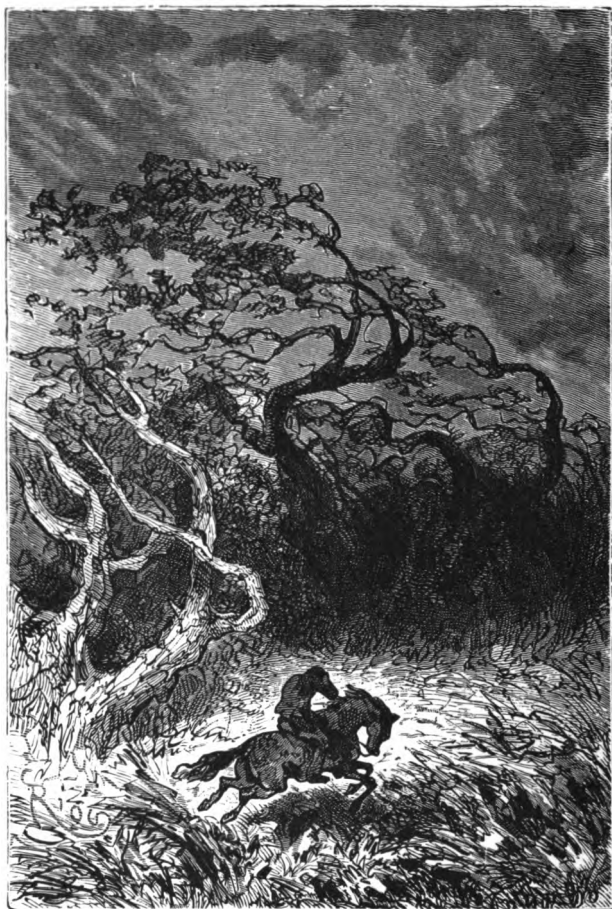
Having taken this resolution, he busied himself with giving Mulrady the necessary directions for getting to Melbourne, and showed him his way on the map. All the *tracks*, that is to say, the paths through the prairie, came out on the road to Lucknow. This road, after running right down to the coast, took a sudden bend in the direction of Melbourne. This was the route that must be followed steadily, for it would not do to attempt a short cut across an almost unknown

country. Nothing, consequently, could be more simple. Mulrady could not lose his way.

As to dangers, there were none after he had gone a few miles beyond the encampment, out of the reach of Ben Joyce and his gang. Once past their hiding-place, Mulrady was certain of soon being able to outdistance the convicts, and execute his important mission successfully.

At six o'clock they all dined together. The rain was falling in torrents. The tent was not protection enough, and the whole party had to take refuge in the wagon. This was a sure refuge. The clay kept it firmly embedded in the soil, like a fortress resting on sure foundations. The arsenal was composed of seven carbines and seven revolvers, and could stand a pretty long siege, for they had plenty of ammunition and provisions. But before six days were over, the *Duncan* would anchor in Twofold Bay, and twenty-four hours after her crew would reach the other shore of the Snowy River; and should the passage still remain impracticable, the convicts at any rate would be forced to retire before the increased strength. But all depended on Mulrady's success in his perilous enterprise.

At eight o'clock it got very dark; now was the time to start. The horse prepared for Mulrady was brought out. His feet, by way of extra precaution, were wrapped round with cloths, so that they could not make the least noise on the ground. The animal seemed tired, and yet the safety of all depended on his strength and surefootedness. The Major advised Mulrady to let him go gently as soon as he had got past the convicts. Better delay half-a-day than not arrive safely.



"He speedily disappeared down a path which skirted the wood."—P. 261.

John Mangles gave his sailor a revolver, which he had loaded with the utmost care. This is a formidable weapon in the hand of a man who does not tremble, for six shots fired in a few seconds would easily clear a road infested with criminals.

Mulready seated himself in the saddle ready to start.

"Here is the letter you are to give to Tom Austin," said Glenarvan. "Don't let him lose an hour. He is to sail for Twofold Bay at once, and if he does not find us there, if we have not managed to cross the Snowy, let him come on to us without delay, Now go, my brave sailor, and God be with you."

He shook hands with him, and bade him good-bye : and so did Lady Helena and Mary Grant. A more timorous man than the sailor would have shrunk back a little from setting out on such a dark, raining night on an errand so full of danger, across vast unknown wilds. But his farewells were calmly spoken, and he speedily disappeared down a path which skirted the wood.

At the same moment the gusts of wind redoubled their violence. The high branches of the eucalyptus clattered together noiselessly, and bough after bough fell on the wet ground. More than one great tree, with no living sap, but still standing hitherto, fell with a crash during this storm. The wind howled amid the cracking wood, and mingled its moans with the ominous roaring of the rain. The heavy clouds, driving along towards the east, hung on the ground like rays of vapour, and deep, cheerless gloom intensified the horrors of the night.

The travellers went back into the wagon immediately Mulrady had gone. Lady Helena, Mary Grant, Glenarvan, and Paganel occupied the first compartment, which had been hermetically closed. The second was occupied by Olbinett, Wilson, and Robert. The Major and John Mangles were on duty outside. This precaution was necessary, for an attack on the part of the convicts would be easy enough, and therefore probable enough.

The two faithful guardians kept close watch, bearing philosophically the rain and wind that beat on their faces. They tried to pierce through the darkness so favourable to ambushes, for nothing could be heard but the noise of the tempest, the sough of the wind, the rattling branches, falling trees, and roaring of the unchained waters.

At times the wind would cease for a few moments, as if to take breath. Nothing was audible but the moan of the Snowy River, as it flowed between the motionless reeds and the dark curtain of gum-trees. The silence seemed deeper in these momentary lulls, and the Major and John Mangles listened attentively.

During one of these calms a sharp whistle reached them.

John Mangles went hurriedly up to the Major.

"You heard that?" he asked.

"Yes," said McNabbs. "Is it man or beast?"

"A man," replied John Mangles.

And then both listened. The mysterious whistle was repeated, and answered by a kind of report, but almost undistinguishable, for the storm was raging

with renewed violence. McNabbs and John Mangles could not hear themselves speak. They went under the shelter of the wagon.

At this moment the leather curtains were raised, and Glenarvan rejoined his two companions. He too had heard this ill-boding whistle, and the report which echoed under the tilt.

"Which way was it?" asked he.

"There," said John, pointing to the dark track in the direction taken by Mulrady.

"How far?"

"The wind brought it; I should think, three or four miles at least."

"Come!" said Glenarvan, putting his gun on his shoulder.

"No!" said the Major. "It is a decoy to get us away from the wagon."

"But if Mulrady has even now fallen beneath the blows of these rascals!" exclaimed Glenarvan, seizing McNabbs by the hand.

"We shall know by to-morrow," said the Major, coolly, determined to prevent Glenarvan from taking a step which was equally rash and futile.

"You cannot leave the camp, my Lord," said John. "I will go alone."

"You will do nothing of the kind!" cried McNabbs, energetically. "Do you want to have us killed one by one to diminish our force, and put us at the mercy of these wretches? If Mulrady has fallen a victim to them, it is a misfortune that must not be repeated. Mulrady was sent, chosen by chance. If

the lot had fallen to me, I should have gone as he did; but I should neither have asked nor expected assistance."

In restraining Glenarvan and John Mangles, the Major was right in every aspect of the case. To attempt to follow the sailor, to run in the darkness of night among the convicts in their leafy ambush was madness, and more than that—it was useless. Glenarvan's party was not so numerous that it could afford to sacrifice another member of it.

Still Glenarvan seemed as if he could not yield; his hand was always on his carbine. He wandered about the wagon, and bent a listening ear to the faintest sound. The thought that one of his men was, perhaps, mortally wounded, abandoned to his fate, calling in vain on those for whose sake he had gone forth, was a torture to him. McNabbs was not sure that he should be able to restrain him, or if Glenarvan, carried away by his feelings, would not run into the arms of Ben Joyce.

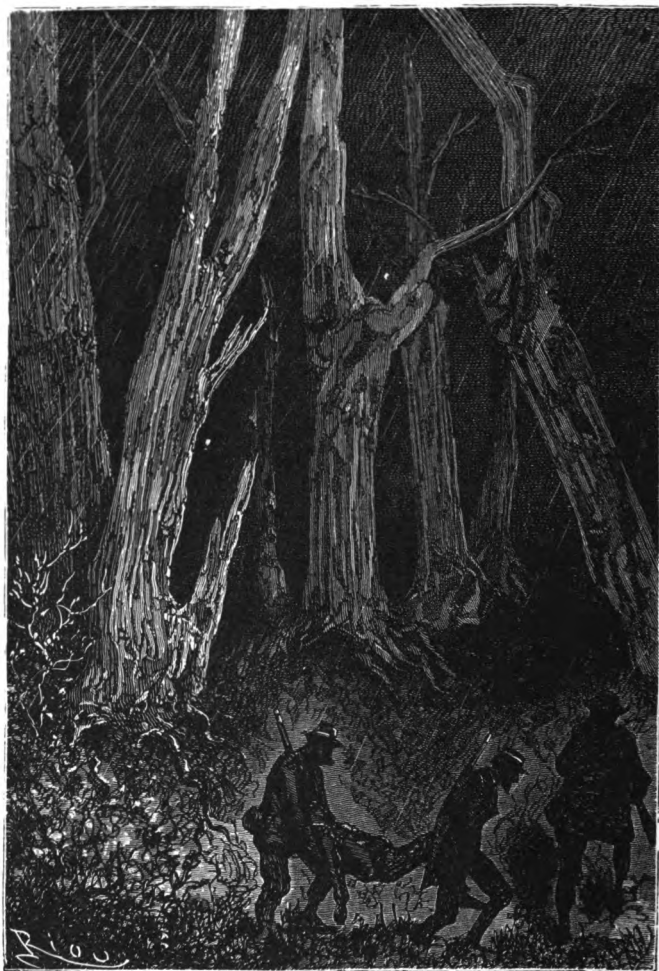
"Edward," said he, "be calm. Listen to me as a friend. Think of Lady Helena, of Mary Grant, of all who are left. And, besides, where would you go? Where would you find Mulrady? He must have been attacked two miles off. In what direction? Which track would you follow?"

At that very moment, as if to answer the Major, a cry of distress was heard.

"Listen!" said Glenarvan.

This cry came from the same quarter as the report, but less than a quarter of a mile off.

Glenarvan, repulsing McNabbs, was already on the



"Glenawan, the Major, and Jack Mangles transported the body of Mulrady."—
P. 263.

track, when at three hundred paces from the wagon, they heard the exclamation—

“Help! help!”

The voice was plaintive and despairing. John Mangles and the Major sprang towards the spot. A few seconds after, they perceived among the scrub a human form dragging itself along the ground, and uttering mournful groans.

It was Mulrady, wounded, apparently dying; and when his companions raised him, they felt their hands bathed in blood.

The rain came down with redoubled violence, and the wind raged among the branches of the dead trees. In the pelting storm, Glenarvan, the Major, and John Mangles transported the body of Mulrady.

On their arrival, every one got up. Paganel, Robert, Wilson, and Olbinett left the wagon, and Lady Helena gave up her compartment to poor Mulrady. The Major removed the poor fellow's flannel shirt, which was dripping with blood and rain. He soon found the wound; it was a stab in the right side.

McNabbs dressed it with great skill. He could not tell whether the weapon had touched any vital part. An intermittent jet of scarlet blood flowed from it; the patient's paleness and weakness showed that he was seriously injured. The Major washed the wound first with fresh water and then closed the orifice; after this he put on a thick pad of lint, and then folds of scraped linen held firmly in place with a bandage. He succeeded in stopping the hemorrhage. Mulrady was laid on his side, with his head and chest well raised,

and Lady Helena succeeded in making him swallow a few drops of water.

After about a quarter of an hour, the wounded man, who till then had lain motionless, made a slight movement. His eyes unclosed, his lips muttered incoherent words, and the Major, bending towards him, heard him repeating,

“My Lord—the letter—Ben Joyce.”

The Major repeated these words, and looked at his companions. What did Mulrady mean? Ben Joyce had been the attacking party, of course; but why? Surely for the express purpose of intercepting him, and preventing his arrival at the *Duncan*. This letter——

Glenarvan searched Mulrady's pockets. The letter addressed to Tom Austin was gone!

The night wore away amid anxiety and distress; every moment, they feared, would be poor Mulrady's last. He suffered from acute fever. The Sisters of Charity, Lady Helena and Mary Grant, never left him. Never was patient so well tended, nor by such sympathetic hands.

Day came, and the rain had ceased. Great clouds filled the sky still; the ground was strewn with broken branches; the marly soil, soaked by the torrents of rain, had yielded still more; the approaches to the wagon became difficult, but it could not sink any deeper.

John Mangles, Paganel, and Glenarvan went, as soon as it was light enough, to reconnoitre in the neighbourhood of the encampment. They revisited the track, which was still stained with blood. They saw no vestige of Ben Joyce, nor of his band. They pene-

trated as far as the scene of the attack. Here two corpses lay on the ground, struck down by Mulrady's balls. One was the blacksmith of Blackpoint. His face, already changed by death, was a dreadful spectacle.

Glenarvan searched no further. Prudence forbade him to wander from the camp. He returned to the wagon, deeply absorbed by the critical position of affairs.

"We must not think of sending another messenger to Melbourne," said he.

"But we must," said John Mangles; "and I must try to pass where my sailor could not succeed."

"No, John! it is out of the question. You have not even a horse for the journey, which is full two hundred miles!"

This was true, for Mulrady's horse, the only one that remained, had not returned. Had he fallen during the attack on his rider, or was he straying in the bush, or had the convicts carried him off?

"Come what will," replied Glenarvan, "we will not separate again. Let us wait a week, or a fortnight, till the Snowy falls to its normal level. We can then reach Twofold Bay by short stages, and from there we can send on to the *Duncan*, by a safer channel, the order to meet us."

"That seems the only plan," said Paganel.

"Therefore, my friends," rejoined Glenarvan, "no more parting. It is too great a risk for one man to venture alone into a robber-haunted waste. And now, may God save our poor sailor, and protect the rest of us!"

Glenarvan was right in both points: first in prohibiting all isolated attempts, and second. in deciding

to wait till the passage of the Snowy River was practicable. He was scarcely thirty miles from Delegete, the first frontier village of New South Wales, where he would easily find the means of transport to Twofold Bay, and from there he could telegraph to Melbourne his orders about the *Duncan*.

These measures were wise, but how late! If Glenarvan had not sent Mulrady to Lucknow what misfortunes would have been averted, not to speak of the assassination of the sailor!

When he reached the camp, he found his companions in better spirits. They seemed more hopeful than before.

"He is better! he is better!" cried Robert, running out to meet Lord Glenarvan.

"Mulrady?—"

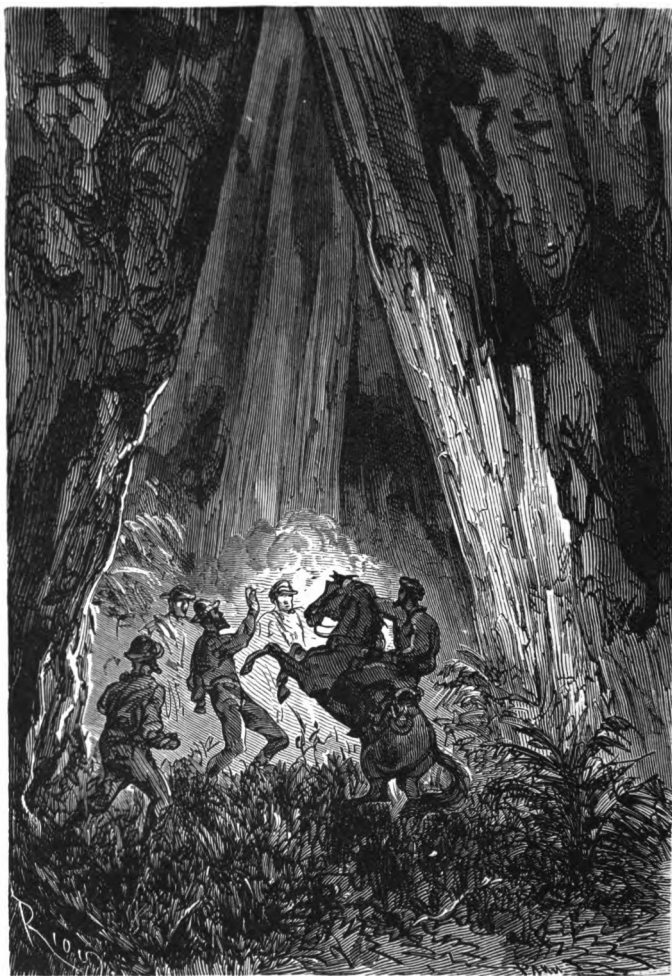
"Yes, Edward," answered Lady Helena. "A reaction has set in. The Major is more confident. Our sailor will live."

"Where is McNabbs?" asked Glenarvan.

"With him. Mulrady wanted to speak to him, and they must not be disturbed."

He then learned that about an hour since, the wounded man had awakened from his lethargy, and the fever had abated. But the first thing he did on recovering memory and speech, was to ask for Lord Glenarvan, or, failing him, the Major. McNabbs seeing him so weak, would have forbidden any conversation; but Mulrady insisted with such energy, that the Major had to give in.

The interview had already lasted some minutes



"The animal reared: Mulrady seized his revolver, and fired."—P. 269.

when Glenarvan returned. There was nothing for it but to await the return of McNabbs.

Presently the leather curtains of the wagon moved, and the Major appeared. He rejoined his friends at the foot of a gum-tree where the tent was placed. His face, usually so stolid, showed that something disturbed him. When his eyes fell on Lady Helena and the young girl, his glance was full of sorrow.

Glenarvan questioned him, and extracted the following information :—

When he left the camp Mulrady followed one of the paths indicated by Paganel. He made as good speed as the darkness of the night would allow. He reckoned that he had gone about two miles when several men—five he thought—sprang to his horse's head. The animal reared; Mulrady seized his revolver and fired. He thought he saw two of his assailants fall. By the flash he recognized Ben Joyce. But that was all. He had not time to fire all the barrels. He felt a violent blow on his side and was thrown to the ground.

Still he did not lose consciousness. The murderers thought he was dead. He felt them search his pockets, and then he heard one of them say, "I have the letter."

"Give it to me," returned Ben Joyce; "and now the *Duncan* is ours."

At this point of the story, Glenarvan could not help uttering a cry.

McNabbs continued, "'Now you fellows,' added Ben Joyce, 'catch the horse. In two days I shall be on board the *Duncan*, and in six I shall reach Twofold Bay. This is the rendezvous. My Lord and his party

will be still stuck in the marshes of the Snowy River. Cross the river at the bridge of Kemple Pier, proceed to the coast, and wait for me. I will easily manage to get you on board. Once at sea in a craft like the *Duncan*, we shall be masters of the Indian Ocean.' 'Hurrah for Ben Joyce!' cried the convicts. Mulrady's horse was brought, and Ben Joyce disappeared galloping on the Lucknow Road, while the band took the road south-east of the Snowy River. Mulrady, though severely wounded, had the strength to drag himself to within three hundred paces from the camp whence we found him almost dead. There," said McNabbs, "is the history of Mulrady; and now you can understand why the brave fellow was so determined to speak."

This revelation terrified Glenarvan and the rest of the party.

"Pirates! pirates!" cried Glenarvan. "My crew massacred! my *Duncan* in the hands of these bandits!"

"Yes, for Ben Joyce will surprise the ship," said the Major, "and then——"

"Well, we must get to the coast first," said Paganel.

"But how are we to cross the Snowy River?" said Wilson.

"As they will," replied Glenarvan. "They are to cross at Kemple Pier Bridge, and so will we."

"But about Mulrady?" asked Lady Helena.

"We will carry him; we will have relays. Can I leave my crew to the mercy of Ben Joyce and his gang?"

To cross the Snowy River at Kemple Pier was

practicable, but dangerous. The convicts might entrench themselves at that point, and defend it. They were at least thirty against seven! But there are moments when people do not deliberate, or when they have no choice but to go on.

"My Lord," said John Mangles, "before we throw away our chance, before venturing to this bridge, we ought to reconnoitre, and I will undertake it."

"I will go with you, John," added Paganel.

This proposal was agreed to, and John Mangles and Paganel prepared to start immediately. They were to follow the course of the Snowy River, follow its banks till they reached the place indicated by Ben Joyce, and especially they were to keep out of sight of the convicts, who were probably scouring the bush.

So the two brave comrades started, well provisioned and well armed, and were soon out of sight as they threaded their way among the tall reeds by the river.

The rest anxiously awaited their return all day. Evening came, and still the scouts did not return. They began to be seriously alarmed.

At last, towards eleven o'clock, Wilson announced their arrival. Paganel and John Mangles were worn out with the fatigues of a ten-mile walk.

"Well, what about the bridge? Did you find it?" asked Glenarvan, with impetuous eagerness.

"Yes, a bridge of supple-jacks," said John Mangles. "The convicts passed over, but——"

"But what?" said Glenarvan, who foreboded some new misfortune.

"They burnt it after they passed!" said Paganel.

CHAPTER XXII.

EDEN.

It was not a time for despair, but action. The bridge at Kemple Pier was destroyed, but the Snowy River must be crossed, come what might, and they must reach Twofold Bay before Ben Joyce and his gang; so, instead of wasting time in empty words, the next day (the 16th of January) John Mangles and Glenarvan went down to examine the river, and arrange for the passage over.

The swollen and tumultuous waters had not gone down the least. They rushed on with indescribable fury. It would be risking life to battle with them. Glenarvan stood gazing with folded arms and downcast face.

"Would you like me to try and swim across?" said John Mangles.

"No, John, no!" said Lord Glenarvan, holding back the bold, daring young fellow; "let us wait."

And they both returned to the camp. The day passed in the most intense anxiety. Ten times Lord Glenarvan went to look at the river, trying to invent some bold way of getting over; but in vain. Had a

torrent of lava rushed between the shores, it could not have been more impassable.

During these long wasted hours, Lady Helena, under the Major's advice, was nursing Mulrady with the utmost skill. The sailor felt a throb of returning life. McNabbs ventured to affirm that no vital part was injured. Loss of blood accounted for the patient's extreme exhaustion. The wound once closed and the hemorrhage stopped, time and rest would be all that was needed to complete his cure. Lady Helena had insisted on giving up the first compartment of the wagon to him, which greatly tried his modesty. The poor fellow's greatest trouble was the delay his condition might cause Glenarvan, and he made him promise that they should leave him in the camp under Wilson's care should the passage of the river become practicable.

But, unfortunately, no passage was practicable either that day or the next (January 17th). Glenarvan was in despair. Lady Helena and the Major vainly tried to calm him, and preached patience.

Patience, indeed, when perhaps at that very moment Ben Joyce was boarding the yacht; when the *Duncan*, loosing from her moorings, was getting up her steam to reach the fatal coast, and each hour was bringing her nearer.

John Mangles felt in his own breast all that Glenarvan was suffering. He determined to conquer the difficulty at any price, and constructed a canoe in the Australian manner, with large sheets of bark of the

gum-trees. These sheets were kept together by bars of wood, and formed a very fragile boat.

The captain and the sailor made a trial trip in it during the day. All that skill, and strength, and tact, and courage could do they did; but they were scarcely in the current before they were upside down, and nearly paid with their lives for the dangerous experiment. The boat disappeared, dragged down by the eddy. John Mangles and Wilson had not gone ten fathoms, and the river was a mile broad, and swollen by the heavy rains and melted snows.

Thus passed the 19th and 20th of January. The Major and Glenarvan went five miles up the river in search of a favourable passage, but everywhere they found the same roaring, rushing, impetuous torrent. The whole southern slope of the Australian Alps poured its liquid masses into this single bed.

All hope of saving the *Duncan* was now at an end. Five days had elapsed since the departure of Ben Joyce. The yacht must be at this moment at the coast, and in the hands of the convicts.

However, it was impossible that this state of things could last. The temporary influx would soon be exhausted, and the violence also. Indeed, on the morning of the 21st, Paganel announced that the water was already lower.

“What does it matter now?” said Glenarvan.
“It is too late!”

“That is no reason for our staying longer here,” said the Major.

"Certainly not," replied John Mangles. "Perhaps to-morrow the river may be practicable."

"And will that save my unhappy men?" cried Glenarvan.

"Will your Lordship listen to me?" returned John Mangles. "I know Tom Austin. He would execute your orders, and set out as soon as departure was possible. But who knows whether the *Duncan* was ready and her injury repaired on the arrival of Ben Joyce. And suppose the yacht could not go to sea. Suppose there was a delay of a day, or two days."

"You are right, John," replied Glenarvan. "We must get to Twofold Bay; we are only thirty-five miles from Delegete."

"Yes," added Paganel, "and that's a town where we shall find rapid means of conveyance. Who knows whether we shan't arrive in time to prevent a catastrophe."

"Let us start," cried Glenarvan.

John Mangles and Wilson instantly set to work to construct a canoe of larger dimensions. Experience had proved that the bark was powerless against the violence of the torrent, and John accordingly felled some of the gum-trees, and made a rude but solid raft with the trunks. It was a long task, and the day had gone before the work was ended. It was completed next morning.

By this time the waters had visibly diminished; the torrent had once more become a river, though a very rapid one, it is true. However, by pursuing a zigzag

course, and overcoming it to a certain extent, John hoped to reach the opposite shore.

At half-past twelve, they embarked provisions enough for a couple of days. The remainder was left with the wagon and the tent. Mulrady was doing well enough to be carried over; his convalescence was rapid.

At one o'clock, they all seated themselves on the raft, still moored to the shore. John Mangles had installed himself at the starboard, and entrusted to Wilson a sort of oar to steady the raft against the current, and lessen the leeway. He took his own stand at the back, to steer by means of a large scull; but, notwithstanding their efforts, Wilson and John Mangles soon found themselves in an inverse position, which made the action of the oars impossible.

There was no help for it; they could do nothing to arrest the gyratory movement of the raft; it turned round with dizzying rapidity, and drifted out of its course. John Mangles stood with pale face and set teeth, gazing at the whirling current.

However, the raft had reached the middle of the river, about half-a-mile from the starting point. Here the current was extremely strong, and this broke the whirling eddy, and gave the raft some stability.

John and Wilson seized their oars again, and managed to push it in an oblique direction. This brought them nearer the left shore. They were not more than fifty fathoms from it, when Wilson's oar snapped short off, and the raft, no longer supported, was dragged away. John tried to resist at the risk of

breaking his own oar too, and Wilson, with bleeding hands, seconded his efforts with all his might.

At last they succeeded, and the raft after a passage of more than half an hour struck against the steep bank of the opposite shore. The shock was so violent that the logs became disunited, the cords broke, and the water bubbled up between. The travellers had barely time to catch hold of the steep bank. They dragged out Mulrady and the two dripping ladies. Every one was safe; but the provisions and fire-arms, except the carbine of the Major, went drifting down with the *debris* of the raft.

The river was crossed. The little company found themselves almost without provisions, thirty-five miles from Delege, in the midst of the unknown deserts of the Victoria frontier. Neither settlers nor squatters were to be met with; it was entirely uninhabited, unless by ferocious bushrangers and bandits.

They resolved to set off without delay, Mulrady saw clearly that he would be a great drag on them, and he begged to be allowed to remain, and even to remain alone, till assistance could be sent from Delege.

Glenarvan refused. It would be three days before he could reach Delege, and five to the shore—that is to say, the 26th of January. Now as the *Duncan* had left Melbourne on the 16th what difference would a few days' delay make?

"No, my friend," he said, "I will not leave any one behind. We will make a litter and carry you in turn."

The litter was made of boughs of eucalyptus covered

with branches; and, whether he would or not, Mulrady was obliged to take his place on it. Glenarvan would be the first to carry his sailor. He took hold of one end and Wilson of the other, and all set off.

What a sad spectacle, and how lamentably was this expedition to end which had commenced so well. They were no longer in search of Harry Grant. This continent, where he was not, and never had been, threatened to prove fatal to those who sought him. And when these intrepid countrymen of his should reach the shore, they would find the *Duncan* waiting to take them home again. The first day passed silently and painfully. Every ten minutes the litter changed bearers.

All the sailor's comrades took their share in this task without murmuring, though the fatigue was augmented by the great heat.

In the evening after a journey of only five miles, they camped under the gum-trees. The small store of provisions saved from the raft, composed the evening meal. But all they had to depend upon now was the Major's carbine.

It was a dark rainy night, and morning seemed as if it would never dawn. They set off again, but the Major could not find a chance of firing a shot. This fatal region was only a desert, unfrequented even by animals.

Fortunately, Robert discovered a bustard's nest with a dozen of large eggs in it, which Olbinett cooked on hot cinders. These, with a few roots of purslain which were growing at the bottom of a ravine, were all the breakfast of the 22nd.

The route now became extremely difficult. The sandy plains were bristling with *spinifex*, a prickly plant, which is called in Melbourne the porcupine. It tears the clothing to rags, and makes the legs bleed. The courageous ladies never complained, but footed it bravely, setting an example, and encouraging one and another by word or look.

They stopped in the evening at Mount Bulla Bulla, on the edge of the Jungalla Creek. The supper would have been very scant, if McNabbs had not killed a large rat, the *mus conditor*, which is highly spoken of as an article of diet. Olbinett roasted it, and it would have been pronounced even superior to its reputation had it equalled the sheep in size. They were obliged to be content with it, however, and it was devoured to the bones.

On the 23rd the weary but still energetic travellers started off again. After having gone round the foot of the mountain, they crossed long prairies where the grass seemed made of whalebone. It was a tangle of darts, a medley of sharp little sticks, and a path had to be cut through either with the hatchet or fire.

That morning there was not even a question of breakfast. Nothing could be more barren than this region strewn with pieces of quartz. Not only hunger, but thirst began to assail the travellers. A burning atmosphere heightened their discomfort. Glenarvan and his friends could only go half a mile an hour. Should this lack of food and water continue till evening, they would all sink on the road, never to rise again.

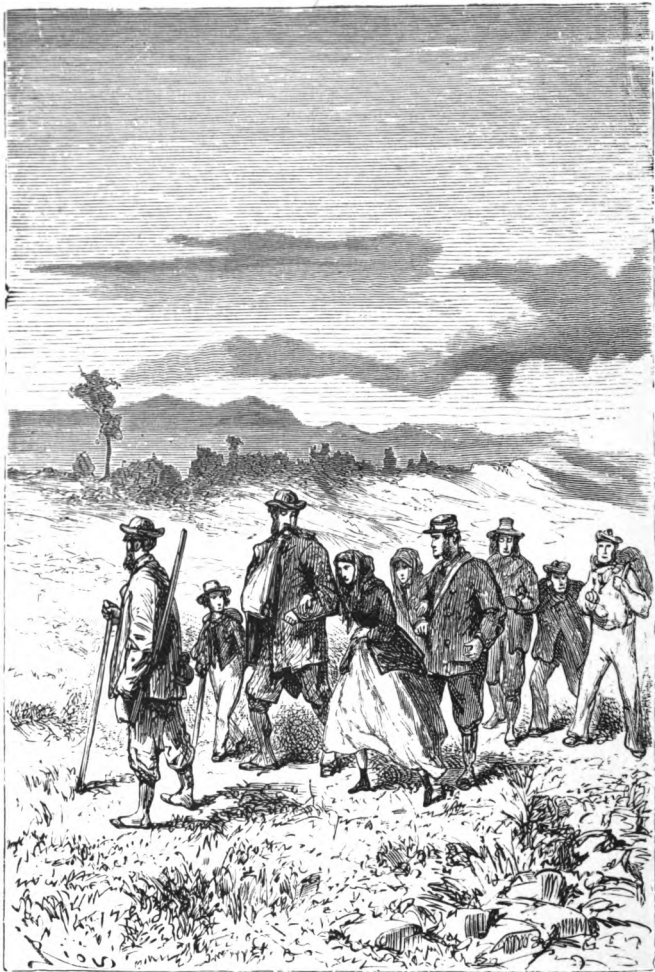
But when everything fails a man, and he finds himself without resources, at the very moment when he feels he must give up, then Providence steps in.

Water presented itself in the *cephalotes*, a species of cup-shaped flower, filled with refreshing liquid, which hung from the branches of coralliform shaped bushes. They all quenched their thirst with these, and felt new life returning.

The only food they could find was the same as the natives were forced to subsist upon, when they could find neither game, nor serpents, nor insects. Paganell discovered in the dry bed of a creek, a plant whose excellent properties had been frequently described by one of his colleagues in the Geographical Society.

It was the *nardou*, a cryptogamous plant of the family Marsilacea, and the same which kept Burke and King alive in the deserts of the interior. Under its leaves, which resembled those of the trefoil, there were dried sporules as large as a lentil, and these sporules, when crushed between two stones, made a sort of flour. This was converted into coarse bread, which stilled the pangs of hunger at least. There was a great abundance of this plant growing in the district, and Olbinett gathered a large supply, so that they were sure of food for several days.

The next day, the 24th, Mulrady was able to walk part of the way. His wound was entirely cicatrised. The town of Delegete was not more than ten miles off, and that evening they camped in longitude 140°, on the very frontier of New South Wales.



"The two young ladies were making heroic efforts, but their strength was hourly decreasing."—P. 281.

For some hours, a fine but penetrating rain had been falling. There would have been no shelter from this, if by chance John Mangles had not discovered a sawyer's hut, deserted and dilapidated to a degree. But with this miserable cabin they were obliged to be content. Wilson wanted to kindle a fire to prepare the *nardou* bread, and he went out to pick up the dead wood scattered all over the ground. But he found it would not light, the great quantity of aluminous matter which it contained prevented all combustion. This is the incombustible wood put down by Paganel, in his list of Australian products.

They had to dispense with fire, and consequently with food too, and sleep in their wet clothes, while the laughing jackasses concealed in the high branches, seemed to ridicule the poor unfortunates. However, Glenarvan was nearly at the end of his sufferings. It was time. The two young ladies were making heroic efforts, but their strength was hourly decreasing. They dragged themselves along, almost unable to walk.

Next morning they started at daybreak. At 11 a.m. Delegete came in sight in the county of Wellesley, and fifty miles from Twofold Bay.

Means of conveyance were quickly procured here. Hope returned to Glenarvan as they approached the coast. Perhaps there might have been some slight delay, and after all they might get there before the arrival of the *Duncan*. In twenty-four hours they would reach the bay.

At noon, after a comfortable meal, all the travellers

installed in a mail-coach, drawn by five strong horses, left Delegeate at a gallop.

The postilions, stimulated by the promise of a princely *douceur*, drove rapidly along over a well-kept road. They did not lose a minute in changing horses, which took place every ten miles. It seemed as if they were infected with Glenarvan's zeal.

All that day and night too, they travelled on at the rate of six miles an hour.

In the morning at sunrise, a dull murmur fell on their ears, and announced their approach to the Indian Ocean. They required to go round the bay to gain the coast at the 37th parallel, the exact point where Tom Austin was to wait their arrival.

When the sea appeared, all eyes anxiously gazed at the offing. Was the *Duncan*, by a miracle of Providence, there running close to the shore, as a month ago, when they crossed Cape Corrientes, they had found her on the Argentine coast?

They saw nothing. Sky and earth mingled in the same horizon. Not a sail enlivened the vast stretch of ocean.

One hope still remained. Perhaps Tom Austin had thought it his duty to cast anchor in Twofold Bay, for the sea was heavy, and a ship would not dare to venture near the shore.

"To Eden!" cried Glenarvan.

Immediately the mail-coach resumed the route round the bay, towards the little town of Eden, five miles distant.

The postilions stopped not far from the lighthouse,

which marks the entrance of the port. Several vessels were moored in the roadstead, but none of them bore the flag of *Malcolm*.

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel got out of the coach, and rushed to the custom-house, to inquire about the arrival of vessels within the last few days.

No ship had touched the bay for a week.

"Perhaps the yacht has not started," Glenarvan said, a sudden revulsion of feeling lifting him from despair. "Perhaps we have arrived first."

John Mangles shook his head. He knew Tom Austin. His first mate would not delay the execution of an order for ten days.

"I must know, at all events, how they stand," said Glenarvan. "Better certainty than doubt."

A quarter of an hour afterwards a telegram was sent to the syndicate of shipbrokers in Melbourne.

The whole party then repaired to the Victoria Hotel.

At 2 p.m. the following telegraphic reply was received :—

"LORD GLENARVAN, Eden

"Twofold Bay.

"The *Duncan* left on the 16th current. Destination unknown.

"J. ANDREWS, S. B."

The telegram dropped from Glenarvan's hands.

There was no doubt now. The good honest Scotch yacht was now a pirate ship in the hands of Ben Joyce!

So ended this journey across Australia, which had commenced under circumstances so favourable. All trace

of Captain Grant and his shipwrecked men seemed to be irrevocably lost. This ill success had cost the loss of a ship's crew. Lord Glenarvan had been vanquished ; the strife and the courageous searchers, which the unfriendly elements of the Pampas had been unable to check, had been conquered on the Australian shore by the perversity of man.

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